



Experiences of Early Career Business Professionals Who Transition to Education Administration Through the Broad Residency

Citation

Grant, Rebecca. 2016. Experiences of Early Career Business Professionals Who Transition to Education Administration Through the Broad Residency. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

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**Experiences of Early Career Business Professionals
Who Transition to Education Administration
Through The Broad Residency**

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2016

An Analytic Paper Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Education
of Harvard University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the guidance, support, and encouragement of many people. I wish to thank the following people for their time, energy, patience, advice, responsiveness, and trust.

My committee. Dr. Robert Kegan, Dr. Richard Elmore, and Dr. Eileen McGowan, a veritable “dream team” to have as a dissertation committee. Each person provided just the right support and insight at just the right time, believing in me, and pushing me to do my best work. They were teaching me how to be a “researcher” and hone my academic skills through to the very last minute. Special thanks to my advisor, Bob Kegan, who “had my back” throughout the entire process.

The Urban Superintendents Program. I am proud to be a part of the network of USP that is transforming lives in school districts across the nation. Special thanks to Dr. Robert Peterkin and Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman for their ongoing support, including their support for regional writing groups. It’s hard to imagine I would be where I am today without the support of the Southwest Writing Group: Chris Coxon, David Lussier, Mishe Serra, and Milan Sevak. From identifying a topic to meeting the first milestones on the journey, this group was crucial in helping me keep the steady pace to complete this project.

The Broad Center and Broad Residents. Since 2010, Mike Montoya has been a my main point of contact and absolutely critical in my completing this study. He responded to every single request, checked in regularly, and most

importantly, valued this work and supported it. Thanks to Becca Bracy Knight and Chaka Booker for approving and supporting this study, as well. In addition to Broad Center staff, this study would not have been possible without the participation, willingness, honesty, and openness of the Broad Residents who participated in it. I am forever grateful for their trust in me to represent their stories and for their time, their risk, and for their introspection in sharing their journeys. I have the utmost respect for them. I also want to thank Punita Dani Thurman, a business-to-education career transitioner and Broad Resident with whom I worked in Fort Worth, Texas. Our work together and countless interesting conversations inspired me to do this study.

Denver Public Schools. I've had the privilege for the last seven and a half years to work in public school district administration myself, with over six of those years at Denver Public Schools. I am thankful to have had the experience of working with thoughtful, committed, and compassionate colleagues during my time in Denver. While conducting this research and writing this paper was no easy task alongside working for a school district, I feel that this ultimately strengthened my understanding of study participants' stories and perspectives.

Last but not least, my family. I first want to thank my parents for their never-ending support throughout my life, which often included a road less traveled. Five years ago, when my husband Scott and I got married, he probably didn't realize that he was marrying both me *and* my paper, and I thank him for his patience and support throughout this whole process, particularly the last six months. Most of all, I thank my children, Reuben and Ari, whose impending

births served as incentives to reach key milestones in the process; hugs during writing breaks kept me going. I also want to thank Barbara and Nelson Zarret for their support and Sarah Hernandez for keeping it all together for our whole family for the last two and a half years. Finally, my dearly departed dog, Hazel, was my copilot through the majority of this experience and I am grateful for the balance, loyalty and companionship she brought to my life.

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Abstract

For decades the American public education system has struggled to meet the needs of our nation's children and families. In an effort to bring fresh solutions to this major issue, a trend of enticing accomplished private sector individuals into the education sector has developed within the past decade. The Broad Residency was established in 2002 to support this bolstering of human capital by supporting career transitions to education for accomplished leaders from business, law and the military to support the systemic changes desperately needed.

A relatively new trend, there is little research on this topic. To better understand the specific transition from business to education administration through The Broad Residency, I use this study to learn 1) how Broad Residents experience the transition and 2) if there is a difference in this experience for individuals with different backgrounds, specifically management consulting or working for a corporation.

To answer these questions, I interviewed twenty graduates of The Broad Residency who are currently working in urban public school district administration in ten urban districts from west to east coast. I examined over thirty hours of interview transcripts and identified themes in the areas of "fit" in terms of skill set and expectations of the culture of the work environment, as well as the challenges transitioners face and the supports they need to be successful to maximize their contributions to the field of education. This helped to develop an understanding of how these individuals experience their transition.

Interviewees painted a picture of a career transition fraught with a

multitude of challenges and sparse supports in place to meet the high demands of education administration work. I also discovered that some of the experiences differed based on an individual's background. Regardless of background, however, with plentiful challenges and minimal supports, feelings of success are still possible.

This paper further describes in detail what these business-to-education administration transitions entail. It also offers conclusions and advice to individuals making the transition, as well as to organizations and school districts to make the most of these individuals' unique contributions to the sector.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Context

The contemporary challenges facing leaders in United States' public education sector are significant. Though attempts to address the inadequacy of our education system have persisted for over fifty years, reform efforts are failing at keeping our nation academically competitive on a global scale. National trends and international comparisons, important because of the direct connection between how well our nation's citizens are educated and the strength of our economy, tell the most compelling story.

Nationally, the past thirty years of results on the National Assessment of Student Progress (NAEP) show student performance flat-lining or increasing only marginally (NCES, 2013). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) offers insight into how U.S. students' academic performance compares to 33 other developed nations. 2009 PISA results revealed students in thirty countries demonstrating mathematics proficiency at higher levels than American students (OECD, 2010). The most recent results from 2012 still showed American students far behind their international counterparts, continuing to rank below average in mathematics (27th) and close to average in reading (17th) and science (20th) (OECD, 2012).

The PISA report also mentions, "the trend data show no significant changes in the average performance of U.S. 15-year-olds" in the three content areas "over time" and that the United States "spends more per student than most countries" even though these resources are at the same time decreasing (Snipes, Doolittle, and Herlihy, 2002). The lagging achievement makes it difficult to

ensure students graduate from high school prepared for post-secondary opportunities; students who “receive a diploma within 4 years of starting 9th grade” has hovered around 80% for the past several years, and we continue to have a dropout rate hovering at about 3% (NCES, 2014).

Our nation’s lackluster student achievement trends are especially problematic given the general agreement “that good schools are prerequisites for broad economic prosperity, individual social mobility, and a healthy civil society in which informed voters engage in the public issues of the day” (Mehta, 2013). The American education system has long struggled to serve *all* students, and to ensure they are taught the *new* skills required for success in our modern economy (Blankstein & Noguera, 2004; Murnane & Levy, 1996). There are also related challenges of high mobility, dropout and failure among students, and significant teacher turnover (Wagner, 2006). There are a multitude of reasons this mediocrity persists and “although no one disputes the value of education, how the country should improve it is fiercely contested. Every few years, along comes a new idea to save American schools, be it enforcing standards, opening charter schools, providing vouchers for private education, or paying teachers based on their performance” (Mehta, 2013).

Leadership To Improve Our Nation’s School Systems

Though there is much disagreement on exactly how to improve our nation’s schools, it is difficult to dispute the idea that leadership is important to the sector. This study, then, focuses on an approach to bolstering leadership at the central office of school districts. Relative to the challenges described above, the central office of urban school districts can play a role in either supporting or

hampering the ability of schools to improve educational outcomes for the 50 million students currently attending public schools in this country (Ucelli, Foley & Mishook, 2007; Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001; Elmore, 2000; Resnick & Glennan, 2002; NCES 2015). Childress, et al. (2006) argue that the central office is “uniquely positioned to increase the ability of all schools, not just some” to create the necessary conditions for instruction to improve. Yet all too often, problem-solving approaches at the district level work “around” addressing the most critical issue of improving the quality of teaching and learning in each and every classroom (Elmore, 2004). This managerial reality, coupled with the historically slow pace of change in public education, contributes to the ongoing urgency to effectively improve our nation’s school systems.

Some encouraging research does exist with specific examples of what it takes to make an entire system improve at scale, documented in a report that examined “how the world’s most improved schools keep getting better” (McKinsey, 2010). This report notes those leaders who have been successful in reforming their school systems “are highly motivated and dedicated in genuinely trying to improve student outcomes” and “are hungry for more information on how to do so more effectively (p. 11).”

It takes inspiring and transformational leadership to lead school systems to change in a deep and meaningful way in order to meet contemporary demands. Yet, the development of leadership talent from within the education sector has not been sufficient. The report, “Educating School Leaders” (Levine, 2005), points to current administrative programs as ranging from “inadequate to appalling,” in that they fail to ensure solid preparation in leading and managing organizations, and a review of the literature on the topic raises the question as to

whether graduate training in educational administration even supports leaders in leading school improvement efforts (Haller, 1997). Furthermore, Hess (2003) describes licensure as merely a “crude device” for filtering incompetence.

One specific response to this need to strengthen leadership in education is an effort to recruit more high quality talent to lead school districts in becoming higher performing in the top levels of the system. Recognizing the need for more leaders capable of managing a system through a challenging and ambitious change process, new programs are emerging to recruit and train such a cadre of professionals.

The Broad Residency in Urban Education (TBR), a program that recruits professionals with demonstrated experience in leadership and management roles across a variety of sectors and helps them transition to education, is playing a role in this effort. The mission of the Broad Center for the Management of School Systems, the institution that operates The Broad Residency, is “to raise student achievement by recruiting, training, and supporting talented professionals from across America to transform urban school systems so every student can receive a world-class education.” The Broad Residency:

- Started in 2002 with its first cohort
- Entails full-time employment for two years in a partnering site, such as a school district or charter management organization
- Enrolls 40-50 Residents/cohort
- Recruits from business, law, and military
- Provides Residents with professional supports throughout the residency, including the opportunity to earn a Masters degree, and with alumni services following the residency

Residents have an average of 8 years of work experience prior to starting the residency, and about two-thirds of Residents have a Masters in Business Administration degree. The website for The Broad Center describes Broad

Residents as “well positioned to identify, catalyze and lead the transformation required to ensure that every American child receives a world-class education” since, through their two-year residency placement they work “from within the public education system.” Through The Broad Residency in Urban Education, the Broad Center aims “to match the right emerging leaders to the right management roles in urban public school systems. [They] then focus on identifying and providing them with the right supports so they can help those systems work well for all of the students and families they serve” (The Broad Center, 2015).

Understanding Career Transitions

Yet TBR is relatively new at just over a decade in existence, so there is little research on this profile of individuals or their experiences in their transition into the field. In fact, few empirical studies exist at all that focus on the topic of career transitions, defined as “any major change in work role requirements or work context” (Nicholson, 1984, Ibarra, 2004, Higgins, 2001). Any literature on this topic tends to focus on the trends of career change, starting with evidence that career transitions are recently gaining in popularity and that careers are increasingly becoming “boundaryless,” where one may make multiple transitions throughout the course of his or her career life (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). This is helpful in understanding the cultural trend in which Broad Residents are making the decision to make a change, though for many in the field of education, transitions are not so common. For example, in results from a national and representative teacher attrition and mobility survey, 84% of teachers remained at the same school the following year and only 8% left the profession

(Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014). Ultimately, individuals willing to make this type of transition are moving to a field that is far more static in terms of job changes.

It is helpful to understand, generally, why people even choose to make career transitions, despite the obvious obstacles major change entails, including financial and emotional stresses. Ibarra (2004) notes the reasons people do decide to take this step include “self-conceptions, social networks, and exogenous events, [which] emerge as key influences in an unfolding process.” Another study identifies a key factor in an individual’s decision to change careers as the extent of an individual’s “network of advisors” and the diversity of that group (Higgins, 2001), and that people with more exposure to new ideas or opportunities will be more likely to pursue them. There has also been a good deal of writing about unique career paths and current trends that debunk more staid definitions of a job or career. Books like *JobShift* (Bridges, 1994) and *Free Agent Nation* (Pink, 2002) explore how organizations and individuals alike take the initiative to redefine the notion of “job” itself, an empowering approach to making the most of individuals’ skills by matching to contemporary workplace and economic needs. With less of a “fixed” notion about jobs and careers, real-life portraits serve to demystify the choices (and their results) of individuals who have pursued unconventional career journeys by following their hearts (Bateson, 1989; Ibarra 2003; Lawrence-Lightfoot 2009).

Potential Practical Application of the Results From the Study

Adding to the research base on career transitions is just one benefit of this study. The ultimate purpose of this study is to understand what contributes to

(and what may hamper) successful business-to-education administration career transitions, and in doing so, inform the multiple stakeholders – prospective transitioners, education institutions, and organizations – about what these transitions entail. The research and associated interview questions aim to develop a rich picture of transitioners’ understanding of their experiences, and aim to illuminate whether an individual’s prior business background – consulting or corporate – makes a difference in how these transitions are experienced.

Institutions and organizations that stand to benefit from these findings and conclusions include The Broad Center, graduate schools, business schools, and school districts in revealing from the perspective of business-to-education career transitioners more about the “fit” between their skills and cultural expectations in the new work context, what are the challenges inherent in school district administrative work, and the needed support systems as identified by study participants, with the hope to help institutions put the critical supports in place to ensure their success.

This study provides both the details of what challenges exist in order to raise awareness, and importantly, asks participants to explain supports that have been helpful in overcoming challenges. This information will allow programs and districts to determine if they have the right supports in place for retaining talent, and if not, would hopefully motivate these organizations to develop such important systems. A few practices that were highlighted in an exploratory study I conducted on this topic prior to this study identified the following supports that would be helpful: formal mentoring opportunities, collegial networking opportunities, clearly defined career paths and transparent policies

for promotion.

To put the pressure of district-level administration in perspective, at least half of the participants in the initial study have left their positions at the district (Grant, 2012). The Broad Residency does have a solid track record of retention within the education sector, “with more than 90 percent of Residents continuing to work in K-12 education and more than 70 percent doing so within school districts, charter management organizations, or federal and state departments of education” (Broad, 2016). Though 30 percent of alumni are currently working in school districts (Broad, 2016), there is movement within the sector as a whole, signaling many individuals will move out of school districts and into consulting or education management-related work, charter organizations, or smaller education start-ups or initiatives. Ultimately, it is a challenge to stay within the district context. While non-profits, consulting work, and other endeavors within the field are incredibly important, the work in urban school districts most directly impacts the largest percentage of our nation’s students and families, and the hope is that the findings from this study can help to support retention in school districts.

Recruiting and retaining talent to join in the effort to transform public education in our nation’s school systems and to manage that change has to be a priority. This study concludes with advice to those considering making a transition from business to education. In interviewees’ own words, advice about the reality of the change, the questions to ask beforehand, and even thoughts about soul-searching before making the change provides some additional food for thought for prospective career transitioners. This study also provides insights and advice to programs and districts that are ultimately responsible for

the success of these individuals.

The findings in this study demonstrate some significant challenges that exist when making the transition to school system administration. This is not to suggest that it is impossible to find success as a transitioner to education administration. The conclusions in this study put forth a number of actions institutions and organizations can take to improve practices that support leaders. In the face of the challenges, a bright light is that these transitions represent in part the sea change that is taking place in terms of infusing talent into the education sector. Since it is only the beginning, there are many improvements still to be made, but this study's findings and conclusions can serve as a support as these conversations continue to grow and evolve.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

Overview and Sources of Knowledge

The aim of this qualitative study is the development of grounded theory, “in which the researcher attempts to derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants in a study” (Creswell, 2003). A few foundational understandings related to the topic being explored in this study – career transition from business to education administration – help to best frame the approach. This study relies on three key sources of knowledge that Maxwell (2005) identifies as important in developing a conceptual framework for a study: existing research or theory, my own experiential knowledge, and a pilot study I performed that was similar to this study and much smaller in scale.

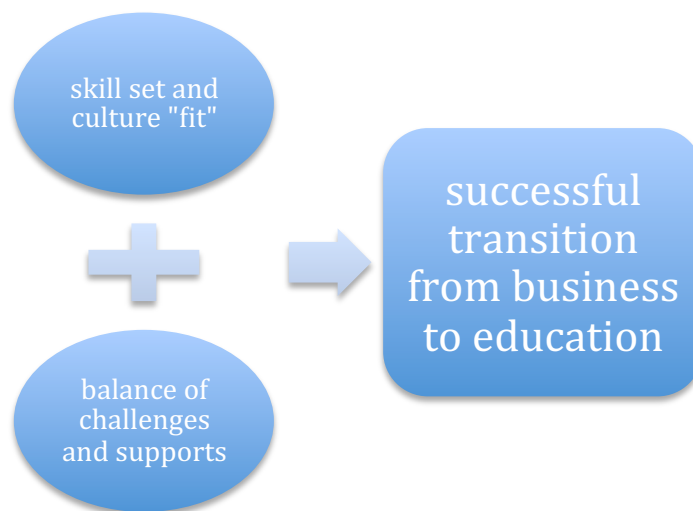
One of the driving factors for studying these particular transitions is the sparse knowledge that exists on this topic. With business-to-education administration transitions a relatively new phenomenon, this topic served as an interesting research opportunity to pursue in a pilot study that was much smaller in size and scope. For that study I interviewed six graduates of The Broad Residency across four major urban school districts in four distinct regions of the United States. Similar to this current study, the individuals I interviewed were selected based on at least three common characteristics: they had all made a transition from business sector work to the education sector, they did so through TBR, and they were currently working in large, urban public school district administration. While this is one of the sources of knowledge utilized in the development of a conceptual framework, it is important to note that the story the

data in the pilot study told was limited due to the broad utilization of the word “business” coupled with a sample of six very unique individuals. This reflection proved to be helpful in structuring this current study.

Conceptual Framework

This study relies on various sources of knowledge to develop a framework of the key “concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that support and inform” this research study (Maxwell, 2005). A framework for this study is presented in Figure A., which offers as a central focus for the study the notion of a “successful” transition from business to education, and two lenses for understanding what comprises a successful transition.

Figure A. Conceptual Framework for Understanding Features of A Successful Business-To-Education Transition



What exactly makes for a successful career transition from business-to-education administration? The framework presented uses two key concepts to

explore this idea:

- Fit: To understand whether a transition may or may not be successful, understanding the “fit” between an individual’s skill set and an organization’s needs, and a cultural “fit” between an individual’s hopes and needs from a workplace and an organization’s norms, values, or expectations is the place to start. The assumption is that the more of a match (or the better the “fit”) between the individual and the organization, the more seamless the transition. The more seamless the transition, the more unlikely there will be hiccups or game-changing failures. Key ideas about “fit” from research and the pilot study are described below.
- The balance of challenges and supports: The second lens for developing an understanding of successful career transition experiences is based in research on adult development. Kegan’s (1982, 1994) constructive-developmental theory identifies a context that provides the optimal support for personal, professional, and developmental growth for adults. This critical “holding environment” engages professionals in such a way that they are *challenged* in the tasks they are asked to perform, while they are simultaneously provided with the appropriate *supports* for being successful. Key ideas about challenges and supports from research, the pilot study, and some personal experiences are described below.

Fit:

Lessons from literature on career transitions to education, as well as my pilot study provide some insight on the topic of “fit,” both in terms of skills and culture. There is some evidence on the success of individuals who make the transition to education, but specifically to teaching; it is limited, but has some applicability mainly in regard to an ability to move from one context to a new context, as well as “fit” with the mission-driven aspect of education. Though the work and skills required for teaching are different than those required for administration, such as content knowledge, classroom management and pedagogical skills, the attributes that support the success of experienced professionals who make career changes may be applicable: strong interpersonal skills and tolerance, developed self-confidence and awareness in the workplace,

commitment, and maturity (Haggard, 2006; Mayotte, 2003). A key factor identified by teachers who transitioned mid-career and have decided to stay in teaching is they experience strong feelings of success, of a “perceived positive impact on the lives of...students” (Wiehe, 2009).

This point about impact is an important one, and helps demonstrate why many career changers to the field of education decide to make such a change. Though most studies again focus primarily on teachers, one thing is clear: most people make their transition due to altruistic reasons – wanting to contribute to society, make a difference, and feel personally rewarded in their work (Hart, 2008). Other cited reasons for transitioning to teaching include a more flexible and family-friendly work schedule, financial and time availability, and support for making the change (Lee, 2011; Castro & Bauml, 2009).

However, making the transition from an office environment to a classroom environment is unique. Since the individuals in this study are typically transitioning from one office-oriented environment to another – albeit from the private sector to the public sector – it would be even more helpful to understand current thinking about this type of transition. Unfortunately, the literature on individuals who make the switch from private to non-profit work is limited: it takes shape more as “how-to” guides and “what to expect” rather than research on their actual experiences.

One study, however, does offer interesting insight in regard to leadership changes between private and public sector, such as moving from a CEO position to a governmental office (Pittinsky & Messiter, 2007). The key takeaway from this study is that the majority of the leaders interviewed cited similar advice for making the change, noting that if they had access to such strategies prior to

moving to public sector work, it would have likely helped ease the transition. These strategies included waiting for the right time to make the change and really understanding what it will entail by studying the differences between the sectors and their associated issues, as well as speaking with people who have experience in making the change. These appear to be universal strategies for anyone considering a career transition

In terms of this notion of “fit,” the pilot study on business-to-education administration career transitions identified the following two overarching themes: 1) Business skills are transferrable, translatable and useful in the education sector. 2) The norms, expectations, and general work environment is different in a school district than in the business sector. In other words, at a general level, there is a “fit” so far as skills are concerned, but less of a “fit” in terms of culture. The theme of making an impact and finding meaning in one’s work, highlighted above, was likewise a finding in the pilot study on business-to-education administration career transitioners, but given the limited scope of data, it was positioned more as a “support” (Grant, 2012).

The Balance of Challenges and Supports

For individuals that decide to make a change to education – with the two most studied transitions the change to teaching and the transition from private sector to superintendency – the literature illustrates some of the challenges that persist. Some of the challenges identified for teachers include financial strain and challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities (Lee, 2011), as well as administrators that are not supportive, especially when teachers face challenging classroom management environments and struggling students (Wiehe, 2009). For

example, studies by The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers (2002, 2006) identify efficacy, a supportive professional culture (including differentiating supports, such as acknowledging the unique needs of new teachers), sufficient resources, and working conditions to be successful as critical. This includes on-the-job, site-specific support and training. Unfortunately, these studies also reveal career switchers expect greater flexibility, support, and commitment to their success than they often experience.

Learning about the experiences of nontraditional superintendents may be a bit more helpful in thinking about challenge of the transition for other nontraditional leaders, since the work contexts are more similar than a change to the classroom. One study shows, “there does not appear to be an advantage to either a traditional or non-traditional career pathway when evaluating the requisite qualities and skills for success in urban district leadership” (Boyd, 2012). Yet some studies indicate that nontraditional superintendents are often challenged by colleagues and the public regarding whether they can actually “do” the job without previous education experience or licensure. They also face the differences in “the educator’s way of doing things and their lives in business, finance, the military, and law” (Mathews, 1999). At the same time nontraditional superintendents are often given more space to ask “dumb” (LaFee, 2004) questions that shake up preconceived ideas about how education works, and their previous private sector experience drives a results-orientation that is important in today’s accountability context. While all of these insights are helpful in better understanding business-to-education transitions generally, these examples do not focus specifically on the kind of transition being made by the participants in this study.

The pilot study does provide a bit of insight on this topic. Themes emerged about challenges and supports in relation to the two overarching themes about fit, described above. Interviewees in that study identified several challenges associated with working in school district administration, including those associated with the system itself, personal and professional challenges as a newcomer to the sector, and the lack of well-developed formal supports built into the system to help leaders be successful. The supports interviewees identified to meet these challenges fell into two categories: supports that come from others, such as mentors, colleagues and networks, and supports that come from within, including personal impact, personal motivation, and the moral commitment it takes to stay engaged in challenging work.

A less rigorous, but third source of knowledge that informs this particular concept of challenge is my personal experience working closely with colleagues who have transitioned from business to education in three different school systems, all of whom have informally shared with me their frustrations working in bureaucratic systems and often characterize the pace of work as slow, counter-productive, and unnecessarily complicated. This is generally consistent with how exploratory study participants described their experiences, as well.

Summary:

The insights on this topic revealed by related research and theory, the pilot study, and in part by personal experience together help to weave the following basic ideas on what may make a transition from business to education administration successful.

- In general, if an individual has worked in another field or sector, that person will bring to the education sector some knowledge of the world of work, and some previously developed skills, at a minimum. This can include soft skills (interpersonal, self-motivation) and hard skills (technical, organizational, etc.) Having developed any skills at all in a previous work life is likely to help an individual make the transition, but the better the “fit” between the skill set and the required tasks in the new context, the more seamless the transition.
- A leading reason for making any kind of transition to education is to make an impact and have a more meaningful career. Because this notion of service pervades the education sector, joining others with a similar value adds to the cultural “fit” of the transition.
- In general, transitions to the education sector are characterized as significantly challenging with few supports to meet the demands of the work. Whether it is teaching, leading, or both, individuals who transition to education need to learn right away how to perform new tasks in a very different environment than before, whether it is a classroom or a school district.
- Few formal supports typically exist for teachers, nontraditional superintendents, or business-to-education career transitioners, unless the transition is supported by a program. For the most part, individuals rely on mentors or colleagues, or on their own personal resources, such as motivation and commitment, in order to find success in their new roles and new context.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Questions and Study Design

The pilot study on the topic of business-to-education administration career transitions opened the door and substantiated the need to offer a more complete and comprehensive set of data to develop a better understanding of how to support these transitioning leaders. Building on the experiences and knowledge generated in the pilot study, this qualitative study aimed to more fully develop an understanding of the business-to-education administration career transition and to take it a step further in understanding whether an individual's specific business background may imply how an individual experiences the transition. Similar in design to the pilot study, this study was designed to develop a deep understanding of the nature of participants' previous work and what prompted the decision to make the change; initial impressions of the new work context; similarities and differences between current work and previous work experiences, including ease, challenges, and supports; and plans for the future in terms of continuing in public education.

Thus, the main research question from the pilot study is reiterated in this study.

Research Question #1:

How do early career private sector business professionals who have made a career switch to urban school district administration through The Broad Residency experience their new work contexts?

Interview questions were oriented to answer this question by developing a rich picture of an individual's "experience" by exploring the notion of fit (in

terms of skill set fit and cultural features of the workplace) and the balance of challenges and supports in their district work.

Research Question #2:

Noted in Chapter 2, the findings in the pilot study were limited both by size and by a likely overgeneralization of the term “business” when considering an individual’s background. Therefore, a secondary question in this study is aimed to assist in answering the first question by delineating between work experience types:

Are there specific prior work backgrounds that predispose individuals who make the transition either from business consulting or from corporate management to report unique experiences in making the transition?

The presumption with this question is that a shared background in either consulting or corporate is likely to make a difference in terms of how study participants reflect on the transition. This is due primarily to the key differences in the cultures and expectations of consulting versus corporate settings. In consulting, individuals are placed on a team, positioned as an outside “actor” tasked with advising individuals in positions of authority and the responsibility to recommend how a company should make changes to improve performance. There are standards in practice in the business consulting world newcomers to the sector must learn and incorporate into their skills repertoire. The corporate world is a bit more diversified in terms of role. For example, individuals get recruited for highly specialized expertise (like a specific financial function, for example). In addition, managers in the corporate world are usually directly accountable for their decisions and how these decisions impact the company. Corporate managers also receive a bootcamp training specific to the “way” that

corporation might be different from other corporate bootcamp experiences, while the bootcamp training of consultants is less variable across the sector.

This question acknowledges the importance of learning how individuals' specific prior work experience might play a role in how they experience the transition. This information can contribute to the development of a deeper understanding of how such career transitions work, and therefore help inform support systems to ensure the continued contributions of these individuals to public education.

To dive more deeply into this topic, this study entailed interviewing a larger number of participants than the pilot study and selecting participants more specifically in terms of business background. For this study, I conducted over thirty hours of interviews with twenty individuals. Of the twenty participants, ten of them had a background in consulting and ten in corporate management.

Sample Selection

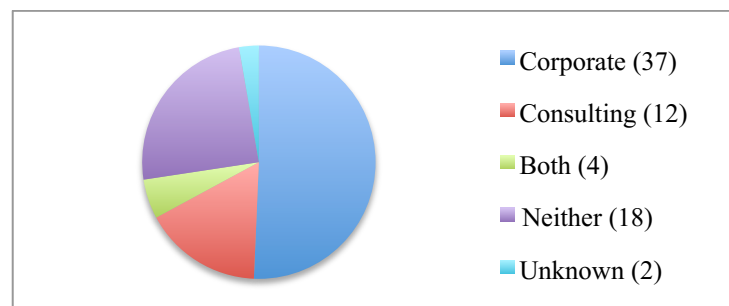
To find twenty individuals that matched the profile required for the study, I purposefully selected potential participants in coordination with The Broad Residency. The Broad Residency provided me with access to their database of Residents, which included each individual's work history. The Broad Residency also provided me with permission to contact individuals, and with ongoing support for the project, such as clarifying questions about their programming and providing me documents or information when requested.

The first step in identifying potential participants was to narrow the database to individuals who were currently working in a district, which in the

end was 74 people out of a total of 294 graduates and current residents. I then dove into the background experience of each of the 74 potential participants by examining the large database with all the positions held (dates included) and the companies/organizations for which they worked. If I was not familiar with a company or the role listed, I would use the Internet to learn more.

During this walkthrough of each person's previous work history, I determined whether his or her background demonstrated considerable experience (at least 70%) in either consulting or corporate work, or if it demonstrated somewhat equal experience in both or demonstrated experience outside the realm of business, which disqualified him or her from the study. The breakdown of the 74 individuals working in school districts is shown in Table A.

Table A. Background of Broad Residents



Background experience tagged as either “corporate” or “consulting” indicated approximately 70% of an individual's work experience was in that particular field. The rationale behind this approximation is given the variety of experiences many young professionals boast, it was more feasible to select individuals with experience “primarily” in one category or the other. This is consistent with the concept of the “boundaryless” career. Examples of business

consulting include experience working in large firms, such as Deloitte, Booz Allen Hamilton, McKinsey, Boston Consulting Group, Anderson, and Accenture, but it was not limited to large firms only. TBR graduates with a background of this nature tend to have experience working in teams to complete high-level strategic projects for clients, ranging from corporate to public clients. The other half of the group shared a background of approximately 70% of work experience in corporate management, including banking, services, or product manufacturing. Despite the large variation in corporate work, roles, and tasks and what a corporate career might entail, ultimately all of these individuals were at one time working for a large corporation and embedded within a corporate culture and thus, are included in the same category.

In addition, I sought to ensure the sample was representative of a wide diversity of perspectives within the education sector. Participants in this study were selected to the greatest extent possible to maintain that diversity in terms of role (some working in academics and some in operations), and level in the organization (managers, directors, and direct-reports to the superintendent). Regional diversity was prioritized, as well. This diversity provides the opportunity to learn about the similarities and differences in context that may impact individual experiences. The twenty interviewees worked in ten different mid- to large-size school systems in the following regions: West Coast, Mountain West, Southeast, Mid Atlantic, and East Coast; I interviewed between 1-4 people per district. Additional details include:

- 100% have a business degree (90% MBA, 10% BBA)
- 50% have a predominantly consulting background, 50% have a predominantly corporate background
- 100% are graduates of The Broad Residency and there is representation

across most of the cohorts. Five participants made the transition to education over ten years ago, seven participants over five years ago, and eight participants started their residency three or more years ago.

- 45% work in the academic side of the district (large variation in role, everything from curriculum to college readiness to student support services), 55% work in operations
- 70% men, 30% women; 55% minority, 45% white (Note: these details were not incorporated as part of the sample selection.)
- 50% have worked only in their current district; 30% also worked in another district; and 20% also worked for a charter management organization (Note: these details were not incorporated as part of the sample selection.)

I reached out to over twenty-five potential participants that met the study criteria via email with an invitation to participate in the study; twenty of them ultimately accepted. In summary, the profile I was seeking in this study was individuals with consulting or corporate backgrounds that made the transition to education successfully through The Broad Residency and have chosen to stay in district administration. Invitation materials indicated the main commitment was a 1-2 hour interview.

Data Collection

Each semi-structured interview was approximately 90-minutes long and was conducted either in person (11 interviews) or via video conferencing: Skype or FaceTime (9 interviews). The interview protocol (Appendix A) aimed at both directly and indirectly answering the research questions, and allowed important contextual and background information to be queried, as well. It was similar to the protocol I used in the exploratory study, but with several updates to highlight key features of this study, including additional questions to help participants reflect on the perceived differences in supports and challenges based on

differences in business background. I also built in questions that asked participants specifically about their perceived “fit” (in terms of skills and culture) in their new role. While I followed the interview protocol, which is mapped to my anticipated categories, my technique was to keep the conversation flowing from one topic to the next through repeating or affirming their previous comments and then using this to build to the next concept as a transition.

The questions in the interview protocol were open-ended and participants were prompted to reflect on their decisions, previous and current work contexts, and the extent to which they feel successful. During each interview, I collected interview notes, which I used for the first analytic phase. I kept track of emerging concepts and themes by writing analytic memos throughout the entire process. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. I used the interview transcriptions for the second coding analysis, described below.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was broken into two major phases: the first step was an analysis based on my field notes and the second step was coding of the interview transcripts.

Analysis phase 1:

After the interviews, I used field notes to build out a table that included the following key data points:

- Date and participant name
- Previous work experience
- District position(s) including location, level, role, academic or operational
- Reflection on the experience of the transition and the skills and culture “fit”

- for the interviewee in the new work context
- Other key themes including challenges and supports that are identified
- Connections with other “stories” in the data set

In other words, I organized my field notes into a “participant overview” as an initial step. The purpose of this was to capture the key points in each interview in order to have the opportunity to compare and contrast the overall “story” of each interview rather than solely relying on coding transcripts for specific themes only. This part of the coding entailed paying attention to each individual story and making initial observations on the “fit” in terms of skills and culture for each interviewee. In order to ensure adequate data collection on this topic, I created a question in the interview protocol regarding participants’ perspectives on whether the organization is utilizing their skills well. When considering the term “culture,” I looked for comments about work style, professional opportunities, commitment, and work atmosphere (Bridgespan, 2009) as indicators.

In addition to the key areas noted in the participant overview described above, I documented responses to two key areas of the interview: early exposure to mission-driven work and specific advice interviewees had for Broad, for school districts, and for individuals considering making the transition. Answers to these two questions were easy to set aside and compare uniquely. This first phase allowed me to identify initial themes and from this, I developed a first iteration of an overview of findings for the study. I was able to use this as a point of comparison as I moved into phase 2 of the analysis.

Analysis phase 2:

For phase 2, I conducted a coding analysis of all the interview transcripts, a critical next step to identify trends across the data set as a whole. Maxwell (2005) makes a distinction between three categories in such an analysis – organizational, substantive, and theoretical. These three categories for coding helped to methodically structure the analysis. The organizational categories, broad concepts identified prior to conducting the interviews, offered an overarching framework for systematically analyzing data, and were identified based on my exploratory study, as well as my research questions and interview protocol.

I used substantive categories to further organize the data in this study, which more closely describe the participants' ideas or beliefs as related to the organizational categories. Note, the broad categories of “challenges” and “supports” are also influenced by theory (Kegan 1982, 1994). All categories were either emic, as defined by the words and perspectives of those being studied, or etic, as defined by my own concepts (Maxwell, 2005). The organizational and substantive categories are shown in Table B.

Table B. Organizational and substantive categories

Organizational category	Substantive categories
Previous experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successes and challenges
District experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill set “fit” • Culture “fit”
Challenges identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outsider to the education sector • Scrutiny, politics, resistance to change • Lack of clear systems, chasing the problem • Politics of education and relationships • Challenges with a boss • Lack of accountability • Career path limitations

Supports identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Broad Center • Home life • Feeling successful/making an impact
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A few other substantive categories that emerged including:

- Making the transition – how / why
- Corporate versus consulting differences
- Corporate versus consulting – focus specifically on implementation
- On-the-ground school site experience
- Early exposure to mission-driven work
- Future plans
- Advice

In addition to organizing my data from the interviews into above themes, I took one more pass at capturing each individual's story following the reading/coding of each transcript and created a table with the summary. In addition, throughout coding, I kept a list of key themes as related to the substantive categories that emerged. These key documents added to the full set of documentation I used for the final analysis.

The findings in this study, then, are the product of several approaches to interacting with, organizing, and re-organizing the personal stories and perspectives each individual shared with me during the twenty interviews. This involved key documentation in the form of field notes, two different participant overviews generated for each interviewee during each phase of analysis, coding, and ultimately an outline of findings. As I continued to reflect on and organize the data, I iterated on this outline. From this outline, I finally generated the findings described in Chapter 4.

Validity and Study Limitations

The two main threats to the validity of this study are researcher bias – drawing of conclusions from the data that fit the researcher’s preconceived ideas or theories (Miles and Huberman, 1994) – and reflexivity, when what the participants says is “influenced by the interviewer and the situation” (Hammersly and Atkinson, 1995). These threats point to the risk of misrepresenting the data or interpreting it to match my own preconceptions, beliefs, commitments and experiences. It is therefore critical in the analysis to validate my findings so to be clear about the ways in which my ideas or my interviewing could influence the collection or analysis of the data.

First, I triangulated my data sources to ensure coherence, comparing the interview transcripts, notes taken during the interview, and all the other documentation I developed described above. This required me to review data points multiple times, and to revisit over and over again the themes as they were developing. It is important to note that while this methodology did include the triangulation of study data to affirm interviewees’ perspectives are presented accurately, the design did not include triangulation with other data or sources of information, such as input or perspectives from school districts. As such, the data must be regarded as the interviewees’ perspectives and their perspectives alone, not those of their sponsoring placements or anyone else. As an example, one finding states that transitioners add value to the organization they join. This is not a viewpoint that has been corroborated with other sources of data, but rather a viewpoint that was shared by most of the study participants.

Another step I took to ensure validation across the data set I used, I was to informally share my findings with my mentors and with colleagues who are TBR

graduates or business-to-education career transitioners not interviewed for the study. This group was able to provide insights in regard to the influence of my own views, over-generalizations, as well as discrepant evidence. This test was to keep my own views in check, not to bring in the views of my colleagues.

A third step I took was to share the interview transcript with each participant and provide the opportunity to clarify or add to their answers. I did not receive any substantive changes. I also feel accountable to ensure accuracy in interpretation and I will be sharing the results of this study with all participants when it is final. In this step, I will use respondent validation (Bryman, 1988) or sharing the findings with study participants and soliciting a response, to illuminate if my own interpretation played too significant a role in the analysis, to the extent that the participants feel the meaning of their responses has been changed or misinterpreted. This will play a role in future presentations and interpretations of the data set.

Inherent in a qualitative study of this nature where an attempt is made to understand and represent the stories and views of other people, ethical and moral dilemmas persist. There is always the issue of misrepresentation or the potential for interference in the day-to-day workings of the participants' lives. The best approach is to be consistently mindful, reflective, and careful about the data and presentation. The validity tests described above will help in the process.

Chapter 4: Findings

Overview

Acknowledging the lack of research and even general information on how business-to-education transitions might work, this study aims to present a picture of what these transitions might actually entail. The initial exploratory study I conducted provided an entry point into the conversation and laid some basic ideas about how we might think of this type of career change. In that study, interviewees consistently reported that their business sector skills were not just transferrable, but advantageous in an education administration setting. Overwhelmingly, interviewees' examples pointed to a level of proficiency at managing projects and solving problems. The other consistent finding exposed the significant difference in the perception of the work context of the business world versus that of a large, bureaucratic central office, where powerful political and human capital challenges exist and there are few consistencies in expectations, systems, and structures. These findings helped structure this study around the notions of skill set and culture "fit."

This study builds on these earlier findings from the pilot study to present a more nuanced and in depth picture of the experiences of career transitioners. While the pilot study's findings are basic and foundational, the themes that emerged in this study help to build a more complex understanding of what these business-to-education career transitions entail due to the study's increase in scale, as well as the closer look at how the *type* of business background (corporate versus consulting) might play a role in an individual's experience of the

transition. Building on the pilot study, this study then expanded ideas both in terms of breadth and depth, which help to further develop this picture.

The findings in this study are presented in two sections, titled Part I and Part II. Part I presents themes that are common or “shared” among all interviewees, regardless of previous experience. Part II reveals how differences in an individual’s background may actually make a difference in their experience of the transition, and their related challenges and supports in the new work context.

The themes in the findings in Part I and Part II are both organized in the following manner:

- Themes about the skill set “fit”
- Themes about culture “fit”
- Challenges
- Supports

These four categories provide an approach for answering the research questions, which ask about the “experiences” of individuals that make a career transition from the business sector to education administration. These categories also construct the conceptual framework, illustrating the features of a successful transition. The components, then, of the “experience” of the transition include areas of challenges and supports, as well as consideration to respondents’ perspectives on “fit.” The sum total of these features – and how they work together – imply how successful the transition will be.

Part I: Shared Themes for All Transitioners

Not surprisingly, themes emerged from this study that were consistent among interviewees, regardless of their background in business. Interviewees

generally emphasized a few aspects of their transition to education, including their desire to solve problems and add value in their new environment. They also described a common commitment to “mission-driven” work, and they spoke a lot about the importance of relationships in any work environment. While the finding about adding value and being able to play a unique role in district administration was consistent with the pilot study findings, attention to the mission-driven aspect of the transition and the necessity of nurturing relationships was far more prevalent in this study.

Participants also shared the challenges of making the transition to education. While the pilot study focused on the lack of systems in large district organizations as a key challenge, the participants in this larger study focused much more – and voiced quite a bit of consternation – at the political nature of this work: when adult interests trump kid interests. They also described what they see as a key challenge as the lack of performance or accountability culture that exists in education generally. Finally, interviewees discussed aspects of their decision to make the change, how they may or may not fit in to their new work environment, and some other concerns about their own professional identity in making the shift.

By and large, supports that interviewees identified were consistent regardless of an individual’s background. Some interviewees identified important support in their home or personal life, while a large majority of interviewees described the key professional supports provided by The Broad Residency as absolutely critical to the success of their transition to education. When considering supports – or what keeps them motivated and “in the work” and ready to deal with the challenges – most described feelings of success

and/or making an impact as the means to maintaining a positive outlook during difficult times.

Appendix B. provides an outline and overview of the findings of business-to-education career transitions, with common themes that emerged. The following narrative provides a full description of the items in the outline and is organized identically to the first two levels of the outline, by Arabic numbers and lower-case letters. Due to the longer narrative in the “challenges” and “supports sections,” the small roman numerals and section titles are also included.

1. Skill Set “Fit” for All Transitioners

a. Adding Value/Profile of a Problem Solver

If one thing is clear, interviewees believe that business skills really do have their place in school district administration, and there was an emphasis among all interviewees that they were all about “solving problems” and “adding value.” As one interviewee put it, “Broad Residents are like water. We go to where there's a hole. Whenever that particular hole is in the district, that's where we flow. I flowed to [a particular department] because that's where the hole was in [this school district].”

This problem solving skill set is generally the basis of a business school education and 100% of the study participants have a business degree.

Interviewees talked a lot about their belief in the transferability of skills of analyzing data, working with stakeholders, and developing solutions from the business sector to district administrative work. There is also a confidence with this background that helps a Resident in making an impact. One interviewee explained, “One thing that I always thought of, was that I can go in and provide

value no matter what it was. That was the one thing I was confident in.”

Another described, “I’m a very fast learner. I get issues really quickly, the core of the issue really quickly. I’m really good at teasing out red herrings and not chasing them. Data analysis might be the wrong word but I’m really good at just analyzing things, cutting to its core and figuring out what the root issue is probably better than most and happening really quickly. Since I do it and I have been really successful with it over and over, people don’t trust you when you first try.” This individual emphasized the importance of building credibility in order to build the trust needed to lead or support certain projects, particularly those that involve revealing gaps and proposing solutions.

Working with stakeholders to identify concerns, solve problems and implement related strategies is important to school district administrative work. There will be further discussion about how relationships play a role, but it’s important to note here that Broad Residents believe they “add value” by bringing an ability to navigate a large organization, particularly a bureaucratic one. One interviewee explained, “We’re invaluable at thinking through organizational dynamics and how to navigate politically. If I think about what Broad Residents have to do in order to really be successful, it’s that.” He added, “We bring the content (not to mention the expertise) – and I think that’s not really debatable – but the ability to really navigate an organization and really drive change is that other piece.” He explained further that a key part of the skill set is also to get other people to buy in, which is likely unique from someone with a “traditional K-12 career.”

This outside experience was described as an asset that positions a business-to-education transitioner uniquely. In addition to what many

interviewees described as a strong work ethic and the ability to get things done effectively and efficiently (and with confidence), nontraditional school district leaders and managers bring their experience of working in settings that are quite different from school district. This, it was explained, allows them to generally notice inefficiencies or patterns that might be taken for granted and identify quick wins. One interviewee showed how this outside experience might come to bear: “The one benefit of working in a really dysfunctional place is that there are some low hanging fruit of changes you can make that hopefully are pretty obvious that make a huge impact. That’s kind of a cool thing for school districts that are big and dysfunctional. It’s not like all these solutions are super complicated but a lot of them are just ... there are some pretty obvious choices we can make that can have an impact.”

In the same vein, many interviewees explained the way in which they are positioned as a “Resident” can make a difference in the ability to take on projects that address these obvious gaps. Many interviewees described starting with the district in a more or less ambiguous role, with words such as “special,” “strategic,” and “projects” in the title. And in some cases, their “Resident” designation also allowed them some latitude in exploring the district across functional areas and departments, learning about other office’s portfolios, and at times, eyeing potential new areas to engage. One interviewee explained, “There’s an intersection of my interest and skill set with the need here. While my job description may say one thing, I’m totally open to doing a wide variety of things and I think that’s hopefully allowed me to add value here. I know it’s allowed me to learn quite a bit because I’ve been exposed to a lot of different stuff.” Another interviewee built this image further: “I really like how I’ve gotten

to dabble in all sorts of different things. I think it's a match for my personality, because I like to learn different things. I get to take on [a specific project] and become a quote unquote expert on that..." He went on to explain, "Even now, it is in a way like a consulting role, kind of picking and choosing where" to find the next project, "which is pretty cool." Some interviewees spoke more to their ability to solve problems independently, while others spoke more about the collaborative aspect of problem solving.

2. Culture "Fit" – Shared Perspectives for All Business-to-Education Career Transitioners

a. Commitment to "Mission-Driven" Work

A theme in my conversations with business-to-education transitioners was their commitment to making a difference. All of them talked about leaving their careers in either corporate or consulting to pursue challenging work in the education sector, but with the conviction that it would provide for a more meaningful and satisfying path. They all made an intentional choice to move to a sector that was focused on serving children. While transitioners' previous commitments might set them apart from individuals that spent a lifetime in education serving children and communities, their purposeful move to this kind of work joins them with others that have made this a central focus and priority in their career choice.

Almost every interviewee reflected on an early experience or exposure to mission-driven work that left an impression. Several of them described influences by coaches or family. For some it was very personal – that education was the ticket for them to achieve a level of success. One interviewee shared, "I

went to public schools so that shaped my perspective on life, in the sense that those were my friendships from childhood, the experiences I had, what I learned, they shaped me ... Launched me into adulthood.” He explained further, “Through my 20's, I started seeing differences in outcomes between me and some of my childhood friends. They were pretty dramatic. I was making money and buying a car and going to grad school.” He was experiencing this success while friends with whom he grew up “were unemployed, had addictions and were living at home or had children they didn't plan to have, or whatever problems. It was happening with people I knew. One of the differences in our trajectory, as I reflected, was education.”

Several interviewees discussed their time working in business while volunteering or doing non-profit work on the side. One person explained his a-ha moment was when he spent one day using all sorts of analytics to help a big business decide on the color of their product. The next day, through his nonprofit volunteering, he worked with a woman to figure out her financing plan so she could keep her building, “otherwise 300 families [would] have nowhere to go. I was like, ‘oh, got it!’ It clicked. Same skill set, much more meaningful problem. I've been hooked ever since.”

Many study participants described a moment where they realized they wanted to pursue more meaningful experience in their professional lives. One interviewee put it succinctly, when she realized, “You don't care about money. You care about people!” Some examples from former consultants were particularly telling. One of them explained, “I had this moment, two in the morning on a Tuesday where I finished up a kind of brutal project, ready to go home, checked voice mail one more time and the partner said, ‘Great job getting

this done; good news: I got 6 more weeks of work!’” Instead of being happy, he explained, “I just saw my whole life kind of unfold before me. This is all it's going to be, working for faceless chemical companies selling unnamed chemicals to other faceless chemical companies.”

On this note, several former consultants explained that they lost interest in what they were doing as they got promoted on the trajectory from consultant to partner. Specifically, they found far less meaning in selling projects than in solving problems, which for a few was the impetus for making a change. One interviewee described the phenomenon, “It was in those three years that I was continuing to advance...I had a really strong reputation at the firm. What I struggled with is looking at the people who were the senior leadership and aspiring to want to have their lifestyle.” He “felt it was just a lot of capitalism at the end of the day. It was kind of like chasing the next deal, you know, driven by dollars more than anything else I would say...That's when I made the connection to want to pursue something in public education. It was a way to connect back to my roots, to what had launched me.” Another strong example of this realization, “It was more so about what was going to keep me up at night...because you're working on some PowerPoint or Excel spreadsheet that is going to make snack food easier for people to get out of vending machines?” This, she explained, was far less meaningful “from being up at night to create a website that is going to help build a sense of community around our [specialized schools] and help our parents trust the school district.”

Some interviewees also described a lack of understanding from friends, family or colleagues about making this switch, but that this only reaffirmed their resolve to move to more compelling and impactful work. “People keep saying

you can do so much more. I hate it when I talk to my corporate friends about salaries ... their signing bonus, performance bonus, and you can make double money or triple, and I'm like, 'eh, I don't have the passion for it.'"

Finding a way to use their skill sets for a higher purpose was not easy for many of them until they learned about The Broad Residency. "It was great to sell [this product] and be in a very competitive market and win in some small ways but it wasn't like I could feel like I was really making the world overall a better place, or even a small portion of the world overall a better place. I started wondering how can I apply the things I think I'm good at and the things that I've done. How can I apply those things in a way that would make more of a difference in a way that's meaningful to me? That was the start of looking into education." Another person explained, "Broad was like a godsend because I wanted to get into education but there didn't seem to be any entry point for someone like me without having to take a very radical shift or step back."

Interviewees also discussed the significance of education as a lever for social change. They shared personal stories of impact with kids at the center of that, and explained how this career change brought more meaning to their own lives. Some of these stories include:

- "What keeps me in it is...the kids are so amazing. I've seen angry kids, violent kids, kids going through the most horrific stuff, all of them, you can see it, you just look them in the eyes. And then having my own kids. I walk into a school, I'm like, 'I would never send my kid to this environment and why do we allow ourselves to send other kids there?' It's so personal now. First it was the intellectual curiosity and the outcome, now it's the personal, seeing kids and wanting to serve and help."
- "I feel like being able to sit with a mom in [a low income area of the city]...and to help her apply for pre-K was like golden. Being able to touch lives in that way was really important."
- "I try to go at least one graduation each year. Last year, I went and I was like choked up for two hours straight because you know, my high school

graduation, I didn't care about. I knew I was going to college, I knew I was going to be very educated. Seeing the families that, just the pride on the parent's face that their kids graduated high school. Maybe the parent didn't. That was awesome and so I hope the kids go on to you know, get some more education or get a really good job or whatever is right for them. I think that's cool. Being able to have this very tiny piece that helps kids find their path and lets them choose it, as opposed to having it being chosen for them, based on their parents' zip code."

Interviewees spoke passionately about making the transition and how it feels like it was for all the right reasons. They made comments like, "I feel, in public education...it's clearly a place to invest and is productive. I feel like I'll never regret having worked to better educational opportunities for kids in [this city]. It's like a safe bet." Another person explained, "At least I feel good about, most days, about punching my clock on the good guys team." Similarly, one person shared, "I'm a contributor in a space in society that I feel is a productive space to be in. I feel like everyday, millions of Americans get up and go to work...and so many of them, I look at the industries they're working in and I don't even feel like they're contributing to society."

One interviewee described how he was appalled by the concept of persistently low-performing high schools – "dropout factories" as they are being called. He asked, "How is that possible that the United States of America, by far the richest country in the world, allows this thing called the dropout factory to exist? I just had a visceral reaction to that. I was like, 'Who's going to fix this problem? Who's going to fix this? Somebody has to fix this. Who is going to do it?'" He says he then "looked at myself in the mirror. I said, 'Why isn't that person me?' Shortly after that actually, I guess I have a serendipity or what. I got an email from The Broad Residency asking me if I wanted to be part of educational reform."

Again, for some it was deeply personal: several people described their understanding of education as the “golden ticket” to success or away from one’s (potentially limited) circumstances or resources. The interviewee that explained that education was his “golden ticket” reflected on his current work in the district, “Like we’re pushing it, we’re moving forward, we’re doing the things that we need to do and it’s inspiring and it’s exciting and I want to help kids get into college. I want to provide them with the resources and the environment to make that happen.” Another person said, “I don’t know if altruism is the right word...I am not doing it for free...A lot of people get depressed at the state of the world. I feel like I’m doing something...Now that I believe in something I feel like I’m doing something and the thing...I feel if we get education right ... That’s kind of the prime number in crime, in health care, in poverty, in housing, in unemployment. If we get that right, and so...Yeah, I sleep all right.

Like this interviewee, several people felt education was the most important factor in society, while some wondered whether there were other problems that needed to be tackled first, including housing and employment. “You see some successes, you see some failures, you see the politics, and you realize – the problems education is trying to solve are so much bigger than schools.”

b. It's All About Relationships

Without a doubt, the “people side” of the work in school district administration matters. Interviewees discussed the role relationships play in multi-faceted ways, some emphasizing previous colleagues, current colleagues, members of their team, and/or their bosses. Their experience and level of

awareness of the relational aspect of the workplace put them in an adaptive and flexible position to adjust to a new context.

Mentioned in the previous sections, individuals explained the importance of being able to “read” the dynamics of an organization, know how to self-advocate often by finding the right advocates, and to use relationships to their benefit. One interviewee explained, “I’ve been able to connect with people and then use that as a springboard to the next level.” Another put it plainly, “Honestly, it was as simple as what I did, I developed relationships with other people in cabinet” in order to land in the role he desired. Several people reflected on business school as having prepared them for this, noting classes on organizational behavior. “The majority of my classes were all on the softer side because I liked it and enjoyed it but then, as I said, post business school, I realized that that’s really what’s more important. Those kinds of things and those skills are really what will help your success more so than the hard technical knowledge.” Of course, how this actually plays out is specific to individual personalities. For example, one interviewee described his ability to connect with others and being “likeable” as key to his success. He explained that people are less interested in his experience when he interviews. He said, “I’m just going to be likeable and they’ll be like, ‘we really want him around.’”

Individuals with a consulting or corporate background alike discussed the benefits and challenges of working with others, and reflected on their previous work and teaming experiences, which will be addressed in upcoming sections. There were mixed reviews on the topic of working with people with different backgrounds (i.e. K-12). Some people described working with educators as frustrating and some described great relationships where they depended on

educator knowledge to get things done. The idea expressed in the latter perspective was that varying perspectives and experience makes the outcome better. Many interviewees explained that it was important to acknowledge what others know and bring to the table while simultaneously being “humbly confident” in the unique skills and knowledge they brought to the table as a business professional.

Concrete examples focused mostly on individuals working within the same content area. One manager of a large team explained, “I lean on a few of my direct reports that I am willing to be open and honest with about needing advice.” Another interviewee that has been in a district for a while explained, “Honestly one of the privileges I have now is just working with some really smart people. [One gentleman with whom I work]...he's just a really smart, charismatic guy. You learn a lot from working with him. You don't feel like you're getting rusty because you're around people who are pretty smart people.” A few examples alluded to old-timers or “folks who have been in the district...I've relied on them to sort of pick their brain, and talk about their experience. A lot of the times, I think for me, it's just reaching out to folks for help, has been really helpful.”

Finally, the saying that “people don't leave their job, they leave their boss” turns out to be relevant here. In this expanded study, there was far more emphasis on the pivotal role of one's boss, which was different from the pilot study. Some interviewees described their boss as a huge support, and some as a major impediment and disappointment. Several people explained how they had to search to finally land in the right place, with the right advocates and the right mentor.

Unfortunately, study participants provided far more examples of being in a challenging situation with a boss, including everything from the insidious (being the victim of sabotage from a jealous or competitive boss, being lied to) to the less dramatic but still very frustrating (generally poor leading/ managing, setting unhealthy work expectations, high turnover in the department resulting in lack of stability, poor support or advocacy).

In terms of the less dramatic, the inability to lead a team effectively shined through. “[My boss] has a hard time delegating, she does a lot of the work herself, and she spreads herself way too thin. If she enabled the people that worked for her, and trusted them to do the job, she would free up time to really focus on the higher level things.” In one example, a new Resident found himself sort of adrift without a real role. He described the situation as “[My boss] didn't show a great sense of urgency, I felt, in fixing that problem or finding me something appropriate to do. I probably could've done a better job of more quickly making something for myself to do or finding a different spot within the district. It was a really, really tough start.” High turnover and changing agendas was also an issue. One person explained, “I think in my first four weeks I had four different bosses because that's when the revolving door started.”

Two interviewees spoke specifically about the lack of boundaries and terrible communications practices. “First of all, [my boss] is a young woman, really brilliant, works 24/7, expects you to work 24/7. If you try to put up boundaries, you will be pushed out. People got fed up with her. People left.” Another person explained, “The only meetings I ever held with [her] were like 9:30 at night. She would set-up conference calls [and tell me], ‘Well, I'm busy

during the day, can you talk at 9:30?" It turned out "almost like all our meetings were like 9:30 conference calls."

The more dramatic situations, in which individuals had to make a job or department change primarily due to their boss' behavior, are exemplified by two stories. One person explained it was "a decision to leave because it's just a hostile environment working with my leader. I built these relationships with the principals and the teachers and the students and the parents. I became a target in terms of the just 'why are they coming to see you and not to talk to me?'" In another example, an interviewee shared what happened when someone from within the team, who had previously been on board with the direction of the work of the department, got promoted to lead the team and abruptly changed direction because "as soon as she got the job she got really overwhelmed and she got the people on the team, who were the toxic people, who were the naysayers to change, they got her ear and totally turned her around." She went on to explain, "She basically booted me out of there. It was a whole fiasco because, I don't remember all the details at the time it was just totally painful. It was like a bad break up. It was just like this painful thing where I thought we were on the same page, it was all going forward and then she just kind of like, 'No, we're not doing this anymore. I don't think this is the right role for you.'"

3. Challenges All Transitioners Face

Business-to-education career transitioners identified three major areas of challenge in making the transition: politics, lack of accountability, and concerns about professional life and career.

a. The Politics of Big Districts

Public education is political business and it didn't take long for transitioners to discover the many challenges inherent in the management of a public good. Some of the most significant challenges are related to this, including frequent changes in district leadership and elected school boards.

i. Adult Agendas and Power Struggles

The most discussed topic when it came to challenge areas – across the board regardless of an individual's background – was the “politics” of working in a large school district. While no one was particularly surprised by the “adult games,” the extent to which policies and decisions are influenced by adult agendas clearly weighed heavily on people's minds. One person commented, “Politics. I think that's been the most concerning thing, I think, is really realizing how big of an issue this is.” There are several features that create this perfect storm: education is a common good, democratically-elected school boards make the big policy and budget decisions for school districts, and superintendent turnover is high, which causes the district to change strategic direction often. Seventeen of the twenty people interviewed spoke specifically about how the politics of education is one of the most influential and frustrating challenges in their work, and with that, shared a strong emotional response to how this directly impacts how well districts are able to serve students and families.

There were several people that questioned outright whether the school district is a viable entity or could reach the level of effectiveness our nation desires. They also spoke to the challenges of adult agendas and power struggles at a high level, particularly where these play an obvious role in resource

allocation or decision-making. One interviewee explained, "Yeah. It upsets me, it actually upsets me, when I find out how decisions are made and that those decisions are not made in the best interest of students. That's not all of the time but it happens and it's upsetting..." He continued, "I understand that everyone is asking for money, all day every day. When politics truly interfere with the well-being of students, and again, we're in [a big city], that's just unacceptable; it's outrageous. Actually, I would use the word disgusting that that happens and that there's not much I can do about it." Specific to the district as an organization, three people questioned whether this structure even works for kids. One said, "I would never work for another large district again. I just think it's too hard to move them. It's way too much politics. I would tell everybody to run as far away as they can from [here], because I don't believe [we want] to change. That's my honest to goodness opinion." She went on to say, "Public education is no longer fun for me. I don't believe that people really want the system to change, or really want education to be better than what it is. I came to this realization a couple of years ago, 'There are so many people and kids who are dependent on this.' I was like, 'If we're playing games like this, that's ridiculous. I can't be a part of the games.'"

One interviewee wondered about the relevance of the school district as a way to lead and manage schools. He said, "I question districts. I've seen so many politics now, so many adult agendas, everyone cares a lot about kids but they care about themselves more, honestly. I don't know if districts are the right model." Another explained, "It's so hard to maintain commitment to mission and mission orientation in such a big organization...it's hard to come up with examples of big districts that have been really successful, in making a difference

for all students. Pushing all students to achieve at a high level. I think that it can't be done. I think that it hasn't been done. I can't think of any and I wasn't exposed to any."

ii. Elected School Boards

Certainly a significant factor is that most school districts are run by an elected school board. School board elections and school board politics are clearly very influential to the process. One interviewee explained that with "the politics of larger school boards" a lot of time is spent keeping the school board [satisfied], giving the school board what they need, "putting my superintendent into position to give them what he needs..." In a poignant example, one person illustrated how the powerful combination of the elected school board and a large bureaucracy makes it very difficult to get things done efficiently. He shared,

I actually told a principal, the one I'm working with [on a specific project]...she was given the opportunity to vent [to a board member]. She circumvented nine levels of bureaucracy and let him know how she felt. He let [the chief academic officer] know. She let [her direct report] know. He let [his direct report] know. He let [his direct report] know. She let [her direct report] know, who then let me know. When I talked to [the principal] I said, 'Listen, if you think that you're circumventing bureaucracy you weren't. You were activating it. Because instead of me helping you all day now, now I have 3 meetings that I have to talk to people about or I have to now do more reporting up even though I've got this handled.' [As it turned out] her frustrations had nothing to do with the project lead and project management and what was happening now...she just saw the opportunity to vent [to a board member]. Those are the things that make it challenging for me to feel like I'm able to do what I need to do.

If a superintendent isn't willing to work with a school board, what usually follows is a very short tenure. One interviewee explained about his superintendent, "He got fired in the end because he didn't want to play politics.

When you're tired of playing politics with an elected school board, you're going to get fired. This was the issue that got him fired.”

iii. Superintendent Turnover

On this note, many interviewees cited the challenge of trying to “strategically” work in a system that changes “strategic” direction every 2-3 years with new superintendents or other leaders, who want to leave their own legacy. One interviewee described it succinctly, “The other point I think that's a true challenge is that you have superintendents who are changing every two to three years. What I'm finding in my role is that new leaders come in, they want to develop their own strategic direction. When that's happening every two to three years, it doesn't give any organization time to really implement anything that is going to sustain a major change as an organization...I think that because you have so many leaders shuffling in, the vision changes, the mission is murky.” Another interviewee shared a similar sentiment, “I can tell you in the public sector, in public education, leadership turnover is not healthy for implementation...When you have leadership turnover every few years, the new leaders basically come in and want to start new projects and you never get anything done. That happens in public school districts. Having been there for 7 years now, my antenna for repeated projects ... I have a very strong antenna. When somebody says we want to do something, I can give a chronology of how that exact same thing, somebody made that comment in 2009 and here's how it turned out and here's what we should consider.”

These two examples nicely illustrate this reputation public education has secured for itself in the public eye – constantly changing direction, but often

treading the same ground as before. Similarly, another interviewee explained, “I tend to think [in school districts] once the leadership changes, so does that culture sometimes. Going into these school districts and talking to folks who’ve been there for a number of years, a lot of them talk about the different superintendents that come and go, and what they were about, and how when they were about this one thing, the whole district gets behind that one thing, and then once they leave, someone else comes in and everyone gets behind that. The culture’s always shifting, depending on who the leader is. I didn’t really see that when I was [working in a corporation]. I think we had one CEO change there, but the culture didn’t shift. It just kept going.”

Two interviewees painted a more grim and drastic picture of what superintendent relations and transitions might entail. About the superintendent with whom he worked, one interviewee shared, “There were definitely people that were out to sabotage his work and sabotage him. That’s a real thing. I hadn’t seen that before in my career.” Another explained, “At the time, I didn’t really understand the bloodletting that was coming or whatever because I was naive. I hadn’t been through a political transition yet; the superintendent’s...Most of that place is cleaned out. That’s just the way it works but I wasn’t really that privy or that savvy in the political nature of the superintendent’s office.” Obviously the extent of that type of change can be jarring for an organization and creates huge obstacles for those working in it.

iv. Competitive Nature of Relationships Within a Bureaucracy

There were also several examples provided about the relational aspect of working in a large bureaucracy and how this is challenging. One interviewee felt that the political and relational challenges were somewhat similar across work contexts or sectors. He said, “You encounter same issues no matter where you go, right? You have political issues no matter what, right? People are people, people have egos, you're going to encounter this stuff, regardless.” He went on to explain, “Anything that involves people you'll have these problems, it's just different in that people's end goals are different...it's just being adaptable to really figure that out.” This is certainly a common issue in education where the goals of the work get “muddied” as described above by individual interests and changing leadership agendas.

Another type of relational challenge that people shared occurs when people feel challenged or threatened – again an occurrence that goes beyond the boundaries of sector. One person described a challenging situation in working with another team, where this team kept pushing back and giving him a difficult time when they were supposed to be working collaboratively. He explained that his boss offered an explanation. “She was like, ‘I don't know how to say this, they're threatened by you, they're threatened by your intelligence, they're threatened by your capability, and I think they feel like their job is threatened because of it.’”

The competitive culture of central office was also emphasized by another interviewee who shared her dismay about how politics interferes with the end goal of educating children. She referred to a conversation she was having with a

colleague who shared with her, “She said, ‘I think I’ve been playing the wrong game.’ I said, ‘What do you mean?’ She was like, ‘I’ve been playing the “We have to educate the kids” game, where everybody else has been playing, “Let me build my resume.” Let me build my resume so I can move up and out.’”

Another interviewee touched on a nuance of central office relational dynamics, also an impediment to the work: the hierarchy. He said, “People are so reverent toward authority at the school district that I would think people don’t realize how much people will do what they say just because they’re in position of authority. I see behind the scenes how much people say, ‘this person asked me for something, drop everything, do it...knowing full well it’s not a very important thing...The way that people are insubordinate at all is in much more passive aggressive ways, like really more subtle ways. Most of these people, a big boss tells them to do something they’ll do it.”

Finding collegiality in such a tough political environment can be a challenge alone. One interviewee shared her challenges of finding a “network” because in the city / district where she works “there’s a clique” that she “wasn’t a part of.” She went on to explain that having balance is important and that “I do my work and leave,” meaning she didn’t want to do the happy hours or other networking-type events. She reflected, “Besides the Broad network, I don’t think I really have a network within the education space.” She later explained that this could offer some serious challenges, when she lamented not being included in important conversations. She said, “You’re not trusted because you’re not part of a clique and we don’t know anything.”

When I asked another interviewee what supports she found at the central office, she offered, “I don’t know that I’m getting much of the central office

support. I feel like I get central office headaches most of the times, they get in my way, fighting things off versus support, so I don't know if there are a lot.” Sadly, a high percentage of interviewees shared one deeply personal and upsetting experience, usually political or relational in nature, that nearly prompted their departure from the district.

b. Lack of Accountability and Performance Systems.

Given the major political challenges – with leadership, strategic direction, and relationships within a bureaucracy – it is no surprise that multiple people discussed the related challenge of the lack of accountability or performance culture in a school district.

i. Accountability Systems Are Lacking, Uncertainty About What to Measure

Individuals with a corporate background and a consulting background alike shared stories of the challenges of working in an environment that is low on accountability. They explained, by and large, that business must be high on the values of performance and accountability for an entity to succeed; thus, the individuals in that organization are held to clear and high standards – different from school district in which timelines and project plans are unclear, and the way to actually even measure success is a bit obtuse. One person identified this as “the number one biggest issue in education: that we are not able to hold anybody or really anything accountable, truly. I like to be pragmatic, and really focus on the results at hand.” He wondered, “What's the true task at hand and really, what are we talking about?” Another person provided additional details,

that there is “nothing driving things to actually happen,” and that there is “nothing to say that something has to happen by X date.” There is a lot of talk about “how we could or should do things but, there [is] very little emphasis put on actually doing them.” One person did share what he felt was a small win in the context of this challenge. “If you don't know what your goals are, how can you measure? It's setting those clear goals” and then identifying ways to measure progress toward goals “with tangible data” that sets an organization up to get better. He described an “awesome” improvement in his department was helping the team set up a scorecard to measure exactly these things.

These positive feelings about setting up such a tool stemmed from this interviewee's prior work experiences in his former corporation, which “thrived” on performance management. He explained, “A lot of what performance management is, is really about goal-setting. It's really about driving performance. It's really about sharing and using data to form your decision-making. It's really about getting your department and your district on board around, ‘we have a common goal here. How are we going to work together to solve those issues?’” In his corporation, the focus on performance management “came from the top, but also I think they were really about developing managers and leaders, like a system.” Relevant to school districts, he felt it should start with the superintendent. “If a [district leader] sees that as a skill set that he or she wants to develop for [his or her] leadership, then I think there's many different benefits of sort of getting behind it. It's not so much just about so you know what's going on. It's about, how are you developing your leaders? I think if [a superintendent] got behind it, and not only just thought of it as an accountability thing, but also saw it as, ‘This is a leadership skill set, and you're

going to be able to sort of add to your toolbox.’ I think that’s the angle that one should take.” He explained, “you’re not just going to be hitting people over the head with accountability.” You have to have the mentality that “We’re actually trying to make you better leaders, better managers, and here’s a skill set that we think will help you do that.”

The bureaucracy and the resource-constrained environment slow down the process of identifying goals and making decisions. School district leaders and managers will spend a lot of time jumping through hoops to get to a decision. One person shared, “You need to file this report and then we need to have this communal meeting – or a tribunal meeting almost – where all these people are going to hear about it, and decide whether it needs to happen.” Due to the bureaucratic and political nature of the work, often for an initiative to really get implemented properly, that level of buy-in is necessary. The resource constraints and the “outdated, and inefficient, not very effective” systems create limits to “the effectiveness of what we do” too. One person explained, “I think people work hard, but [we’re] not really getting the results that need to be made, especially given that we don’t have much money.”

Furthermore, the school and district environment is often very reactive, responding to the multiple stakeholder groups including parents, teachers, community, school board, students, teacher unions, media, business community, and the list goes on. As a result, “how these big districts work...is solving the problem of the day. Who cares about long-term strategy? We just need to throw money at a problem to shut it up.” The challenge of identifying goals, and the lack of accountability and performance systems obviously makes it difficult for anyone tasked with “strategy” work in the district, as many Broad Residents are.

ii. Conflicts of Mindset and Employee Performance

Transitioning a school district to become more “strategic” is a huge task for a number of reasons, including those listed above. There is the additional obstacle of historical and institutional memory in school districts that have long operated on loose coupling and teaching in isolation (Elmore 2004). There are other politically complex factors that make implementing a performance management system a challenge too: disagreements on how to evaluate teachers, ever-changing theory or opinions on what should be taught and how.

It is a shift for someone transitioning from business into a political environment that has uneven implementation around norms and rules about managing performance. It is similarly a shift for educators to think differently about how to identify goals and create a systemic way for reaching them, especially when there has been little orientation or formal training to this practice. This does create a bit of a conflict of mindset. Where business professionals use measures and metrics to track process and identify next steps, many educators do so as well, but in a less linear fashion. For business professionals, results may be more black-and-white, but for educators, especially teachers, this process is a bit greyer. One person shared, the “main differentiator between [the business] mindset and the educator has to do with whether it would even be possible to identify a ‘tangible result.’”

The way in which transitioners generally spoke about accountability and performance revealed a different language and way of thinking about this topic than may be typical of a school or the school district context. Some interviewees felt this created more of a challenge in implementing systems to identify needs and tackle problems. Several interviewees explained that the lack of experience

outside of education can be an impediment to moving forward with process improvement, as educators “don’t know what it looks like in other organizations, outside of education. When I talk about inefficiencies of a process, to map it out...they have no frame of reference to kind of understand how you really go about [it] systematically.” Another person explained that the difference in backgrounds may mean that sometimes business folks and educators can’t even come to agreement on how to approach a certain project or problems. In these cases, the two groups “don’t overlap at all, in terms of the way we look at a problem.” This “is very challenging because sometimes we just won’t get each other to budge.” He explained that he meets with a lot of principals “and they come at a problem in a very specific way. I’m very intrigued with it and I respect it wholeheartedly but I come at it a different way and sometimes we just can’t bridge that divide. That is a challenge.” One interviewee that had been working in a district for several years noted that she could immediately recognize this frustration for new employees with a business background that had recently started with the district. She said, “I felt like they didn’t quite understand that they were in an environment that wasn’t structured in the way they wanted to try to work. I saw the constant friction between the folks that have been there for a while and the newer folks.”

Finally, several interviewees lamented that the challenge of implementing a solid system of performance may not only be related to mindset and background, but also in work expectations and capacity. Without a strong system of setting organizational goals and measuring progress toward those goals, it is also difficult to ascertain individual performance. They lamented working with “folks [that] have a mixed skill level” and “working with a

different caliber” of people than they’ve worked with in their consulting life, where “I was very fortunate that everybody was an A+ player. [My current] team is mixed, one group is B+ players and another group is very inconsistent.”

A related issue that was brought up was the normative culture of previous experience that shapes the current work ethic or expectations of educators and of business professionals. One interviewee explained, “I’m coming from a world where I am salaried, work to be done and I am salaried. Today I need to spend more time. I don’t show up at 9 leave at 4 or 8:30 and 4. If I have things to do I continue to work until I’m either done like, ‘that’s it for the day, I don’t want to work anymore’ or I finish. Most of the peers around me [came] up in a system where they’re labor and they have entitlements.” He went on to explain, “Even though they are no longer a part of that system,” their mentality is different. “I came up in a system where there was no representation to protect me from my 70 hour, 80 hour week. They’re coming up from ‘everything has been negotiated.’” Similarly, in some cases, there may even exist camaraderie among educators that have worked at the school site, who even continue to see the central office as “other.” One interviewee explained, “I don’t have whatever mentality a former teacher has, good or bad. I don’t have it. I don’t have the [district] as an outside entity. Teachers, principals and even people at central office refer to [the district] as ‘them.’”

Where there is less clarity on goals and expectations, there is even less clarity on what it means to be a strong employee or be producing quality work. One person lamented that in a large district, there are systems and politics in place “that make it really tough to ensure that you’ve got the right people and the best people for the job all the time.” Another pointed out that education is a

“very age-biased and certification-biased culture, in that the older you are or the more degrees or certificates you have, the more powerful and the better you must be.” He went on to explain, “The assumption is the older person is the more senior person because it’s a seniority driven culture, but in reality, and you know from research, the age and the certificates are not very highly correlated to performance.”

Similarly, people alluded to the idea that the processes of hiring, firing and promotion may be influenced by factors other than merit or productivity. (This is not to say that relationships and politics never play a role in business, but that the lack of clarity around performance in education makes these decisions even less transparent.) One person shared that after she made some highly controversial decisions about letting go some members of her team, she became the target of some groups, “since” she explained, “no one ever fires anyone here.” Some interviewees found their own successes hampered by preconceived ideas about who should get promoted and when. One person described how two completely different perspectives existed about his professional growth, where he wasn’t “always satisfied with the speed with which I’ve progressed...[but] other people, they probably think I’ve progressed way too fast, some people who maybe are the same age as me or even maybe a similar level of education and with the district for a while. I know there is a little bit of resentment about that. I know because I’ve been told from higher up, “we had to be sensitive about making your progress, to slow you down a bit.” Similarly, given the context, another interviewee shared the challenge of positional authority in which Broad Residents often find themselves immediately. “I think for many of us, there’s a lot of questioning as to how come these new people,

we're all just relatively young for the most part, are coming in and they are reporting up straight to a chief [or senior leader]."

Several examples interviewees provided pointed to challenges in implementing effective performance management systems in school districts. One interviewee explained this as a real need to improve organizationally and to improve how districts work. He said, "It's not a business idea. This is sort of an organizational idea. Any time you get people, any group of more than 5, how are you going to get them to work together on a particular goal? I think from a more global perspective, we all have to work together in this in order to serve our kids in an effective way. How do we do that, and how do we know we're doing a good job?" He continued, "We're a large school district. In order for us to serve our kids, we have to be organized."

It may come down to some different viewpoints on this, as well – whether the work of education leadership and administration is about change or improvement or it's about maintaining the status quo. One interviewee pointed out that in his district, he felt that most people were "okay with the status quo. There's nothing wrong." He explained further, "It's not about anything transformative. It's just that hey, this is a career I got into." These examples illustrate how if there is not clarity about the purpose or a level of buy-in, moving the whole organization in the same direction is extremely challenging.

c. Professional Life and Identity

A third area that emerged in terms of shared challenges that career transitioners face had to do with professional life and identity. To understand this key challenge area, one needs to reflect on the whole trajectory of the career

journey. This includes the past (maintaining the skills they developed in another sector), the present (the challenge of working in a sector where they have had limited on-the-ground experience – but crave it), and the future (the possibilities for next steps or a future in education administration).

i. Keeping Skills From the Past Relevant

The Broad Residency recruits professionals because of the unique skill set they possess with the idea that these skills can be used to solve the kinds of problems that emerge in large school district work. Noted already, the skills individuals identified as being important include analyzing data, developing a compelling story with key data points, leading a decision-making process, facilitating meetings, managing projects, etc. Yet several interviewees, particularly those that had been working in school districts for five or more years, lamented that in the politics and the rush of the work, they are starting to lose the skills they learned and needed working in business. Even newer career transitioners recognized immediately that “your skills stagnate a little bit when you get to the district.” This is because “there aren’t a ton of folks doing the most modern techniques, business techniques or finance techniques or things like that. You’re definitely going to learn certain things and definitely you’re always going to learn certain hard skills that maybe you didn’t have or even soft skills, but you’re not going to learn as much as you would in the private sector.” While individuals’ shared how their knowledge of education is increasing, some identified feeling “cut off from everything” having come from “a place where you’re on the cutting edge all the time” to school district work, which was often described as lacking innovation.

There are two associated challenges with this in terms of career development. First, as these “skills that are foundational” to business professionals become less up-to-date, it begs the question whether this lessens their potential impact in utilizing these skills in the public sector. If the theory is to get strong business professionals into leading and managing roles to use these unique skills, the question is: what happens if the skill set gets frozen in time and doesn't develop further? Similarly, a couple individuals shared their concern that this loss of skills also limits their prospects when thinking about next steps, for example if they wanted to return to the private sector. One interviewee explained that this loss of skills was almost impetus for her to return to business. “Being on the cutting edge of how you work has faded in the sunset...That’s concerning to me...Part of the reason why I thought about leaving is because I felt like I needed to regain that again.”

Another interviewee shared some advice that was once given to her. She said, “I’ll never forget...when I first started with [the district, someone told me] ‘Make sure you don't lose your skill set.’ I was like, ‘What are you talking about?’ She said, ‘You come into public education ... You have a certain skill set, soft and hard skills, it's like second nature to you, and you've used them for the last x number of years.’ She was like, ‘Within public education, you'll get a whole different skill set, but make sure you don't lose the skill set that you walked in the door with, because it's very easy, because they don't do things the way they do them in the business world.’”

ii. Being an “Outsider” to the Sector

The pilot study identified a key impediment to career transitioners’ work was not being from the education sector. The findings in this study resonate similarly. Participants in this study talked about the challenge of having credibility without having spent any time at the school site, particularly in a sector that places a lot of value on that experience. Interviewees shared being told outright that they are “outsiders” and that in some of the most difficult situations, stakeholder groups will make a point of explaining how Broad Residents or individuals with a business background “don’t belong.” One person shared that a colleague told him “it wasn’t possible” to “impact students without having been a teacher, or an administrator in a school.” Another interviewee observed, “There are definitely people who are somewhat skeptical because you aren’t a teacher,” and another, “You haven’t walked in my shoes. You’re not boots on the ground, at a school. You didn’t come up through the school system either.” In some places, having experience specifically in that district mattered a lot, as well.

In addition to this notion that someone from outside the sector couldn’t possibly understand the work of education, there is another exacerbating factor and that is, many interviewees reported, educators not really understanding the relevance of the business skill set in education administration. People wished they could be “trusted,” that “the people who are coming in have skills to offer and can...help to drive towards stronger student outcomes based on whatever their experiences are.” One person shared, “I feel like there was no understanding that because I was coming from somewhere else, I had a value to add. That was challenging.” Another person felt “there is the natural resistance

to ideas coming from people who are perceived as being non-educators coming in from the outside.”

In some situations, it wasn’t even an educator versus non-educator dichotomy and rather a test of how long a person has been with the district. One person explained, “I’m working with a lot of accountants and finance type people and so for them it’s more about that I haven’t paid my dues, not so much that I haven’t been a teacher.” Another person talked about a colleague he worked with, involved with maintenance, who came to the district “from outside the education world.” He went on to explain, “Most of the people that I work with on a daily basis now are folks who have been here for a long time” but this guy – “he talks about the ‘real world.’ He talks about what people are doing out in the real world and how we need to bring a lot of that thinking, to where we are here.” A final example, one person described that there are “a couple folks that I’ve developed a relationship with...{who} may not have been a teacher, they’ve just had expertise in a certain area, like finance, or transportation, whatever it may be, and they’ve just been working in that environment for years; 30 years, 25 years.” He drew the comparison that even though they may not have the perspective, ““you were never a teacher, so what do you know? What do you know about education?”” their judgment may be more like ““what do you know about budgets?””

As a result, several interviewees shared that not only are they careful about what they say, described above, but also some of them actually try to hide their skills. One person shared that before she arrived at the district, she was extremely proud of all she accomplished professionally. After a while at the district, she decided it was best not to talk about her business background. She

said, “I came here just being proud of some of my past work and that didn't matter. It didn't matter to many.”

Another person explained, “A big part of what I did to try to defuse that perception of being this outside management guy is that I tried never to come across as the guy who had all the answers. I didn't want to be the guy who would come in, it's, ‘I'm coming in from the outside to tell you how to get things done right because you guys are too stupid to figure it out yourselves.’” And another interviewee said she came in in a “deferring position.” “I didn't have any problem in introducing myself letting everybody know, ‘I am definitely here to learn. I do want to see or hear more about what the experiences had been. I am excited to experience this; I am elated to be here. Just want to help. Just want to be a support.’”

Interviewees also shared that they need to be especially careful about how they go about their work, trying not to “sound like a jerk” – because even after a few years in the district “they consider you an outsider because you haven't grown up in the system. I try to be sensitive to that and not sound like they think I would, given my background. I don't know if I'm very successful of not sounding like a corporate jerk but I do my best not to sound like that...they perceive you in a certain way sometimes, not everybody.”

iii. Craving More Experience in the Field

A theme among the interviewees in this study was the desire to spend more time at the school site. This was not just because of a perceived bias against them, discussed above, that they lack the experience at the school site. Rather, many interviewees described an authentic interest in spending time with

students and learning more about what makes a school tick – after all, it was the mission of the work – serving students – that brought them to make the job transition in the first place. One person explained, “I think [it]’s another great challenge for Broad Residents. For most of us we have not spent time in a school.”

In nearly half the interviews, people talked specifically about getting more on-the-ground experience. “Being someone who didn’t teach K-12, I wanted to get out to schools as much as I could.” Another explained, “I knew that I had [made this transition] because of the kids and I definitely wanted to better understand what the environment was like in schools if I was going to be doing things to support them.” The need was emphasized multiple times: “Try to get into a classroom. Try to get exposed to what’s happening from day one if you don’t have that background.” Another person pointed out that this is additionally important, “Because we all think we know school because we’ve been to school, but when you come back to school as an adult” it is different than how you experienced it as a child.

Several people said school site experience should be a core part of the residency, suggesting this “school based experience” should go beyond “operational offices or think tank projects...[Residents] need to have access to the schools and students and understand how the system works.” Another interviewee suggested, that “in the first sixth months of the residency” Residents should “be in a school...once a week. That way you can actually experience what it’s like to be in a school and what it’s like to teach. You know who you’re impacting and how that impacts” the classroom. Another interviewee reiterated, suggesting Residents be given time to “substitute teach” while another

suggested, “giving a sabbatical” after five years with a district “for a resident [to be] either a teacher or principal in order to “get that experience.”

Others pointed to the value of honing in on specific experiences with schools. One person described an experience of getting more field experience with budgets by spending a period of time supporting schools directly, thinking “it was what I needed to learn exactly what it takes to provide good service. What kinds of questions do they have?” Another person shared, “I’m working on empathy. I’ve ridden the bus with bus drivers as they do their routes to get a sense of what it’s like.”

Finally, one person explained that it was important for future prospects to “really get an opportunity to work on the academic side of the house...you don’t get that opportunity too often. For me it was if I’m going to make a career out of this and be here for the long haul, I need that background. It’s a strategic move” to ensure there was flexibility in opportunity as his career progressed.

iv. Career Path Limitations

On this note, a finding in the pilot story that was reiterated in this study is concerns over career path. Not only is it often unclear what it takes to be offered increasing responsibility or new opportunities for leading or managing in a school district, for several interviewees, they mentioned a concern that there are few positions that would offer the kind of challenge they would like as they grow professionally. Several people echoed this concern, that “you get to a certain point in your career, there are not a lot of jobs you can take” and “there are only a few jobs you can take in each system and they happen to be occupied by very competent individuals.”

A few interviewees suggested that this conversation should be had upfront and that a possible career path should be identified ahead of time.

Interviewees identified two years and five years as important milestones.

Another interviewee explained that a big issue “is getting folks to stay,” and that the two-year point is the most important. “I think up front there should be more of a career plan after the two-year period. ‘This is what we see for you.

Obviously you have to impress us; you have to do good work. We have to want you.’ There should be more of a formal plan I think in place, verses, ‘Oh, we’ll figure it out when the time comes.’ Then folks will be more motivated, I think, [in the] two-year residency.” He further explained that after the two year residency, people will be “much more likely to stay if they know that there’s an option. It should be very specific, like, ‘these are the job classifications that we think are a good next step.’”

Another interviewee reflected, “I don't necessarily know that I had a plan coming in. I think when you get into something like this, it's almost like, ‘What does the next five years look like for me?’ Or, ‘What do the next three years look like for me? How do I get there?’ I think, as you get more and more residents, this probably becomes very hard, but maybe that [conversation] being a part of what they do as residents.” A third interviewee elaborated on this longer-term issue of career path. He mused, “When you have someone that's 6 to 10 years in now, where do you want them?”

Add to this equation the work environment from which many business professional transition, with what interviewees described as having clear lines of promotion and authority. One former consultant explained, “Consulting is the Gold Standard. You walk in the door they tell you, ‘After two years, you need to

do these skills and if you do, you're promoted to this. After two years from that, you do these skills, you're promoted to this.' It's so transparent...it was so straightforward and you knew exactly what you had to do. They gave you the opportunities to prove it and if you proved it, they kept moving you...they were amazing at it. I was so appreciative of it.” Another former consultant explained that she was used to a work environment in which, “every couple of years” there was an opportunity to get promoted, and to land in a position where there was less chance of that was difficult. She wondered why there is a mentality in the district that a person would want to stay and continue to do the same thing for the long-term. She said, “You don't understand, I am too restless for that. That's not going to happen.”

Considering all the challenges and limitations mentioned above, there was a range of “next steps” people were considering. Some interviewees indicated they were ready for a change but were interested in continuing district work, including taking on a position of higher authority, such as superintendent. One person had interest in staying in education but working in what he perceived as a more functional, smaller organization like a Charter Management Organization. One person stated she was interested in possibly returning to business.

There were also a couple people that felt they were in just the right position: making a difference, building their own knowledge, and finding some work/life balance. They were pleased with their current situation and had little interest in making a change.

4. Supports Identified by All Transitioners

The list of challenges far outweighs the supports interviewees identified. However, there were some. These include support by the Broad Residency, interviewees' internal supports of satisfaction and feelings of making a difference, and some personal and home life supports.

a. The Broad Residency/The Broad Center

By far, the supports provided by The Broad Center as part of The Broad Residency were the most frequently mentioned. These findings nearly match identically the findings in the pilot study. Individuals emphasized the criticality of the Broad Center in several areas including support in making the transition itself, staff support during the residency, support from the network of peers/colleagues, the quarterly get-togethers during the residency and the annual forum that is open to all alumni, and executive coaching.

i. Support in Making the Transition

The Broad Center was identified as key in supporting individuals in making the transition from business to education. First, interviewees shared that The Broad Residency provides an opportunity to make the transition in a prestigious way. This feeling starts in the interview, where “there’s a hundred people all vying for the same positions, you know that you’re surrounded by just really impressive people. To be chosen like you just feel honored and you question it. That was the first thing I did, is how could they have ... I’ve talked to everyone in that room. How could they have possibly picked me? It felt great and it was the biggest turning point in any of my career.”

In terms of the transition itself, “Broad does a phenomenal job of...taking away all the reasons that you might have to not do it [even if] it's financial. I don't want to take a huge pay cut. They put a safety net under you for that. Or like job responsibility-wise, I don't want to start over in a new field totally at the bottom of the totem pole. They tailor made these opportunities for your cognitive level and major impact.” Another person shared, “[Broad] was tremendously valuable to help me transition. I don't know where I would have landed without them over two years and a lot just, some basic technical knowledge and as well contextual knowledge of the system that I'm entering and how to present yourself and how to begin to insert yourself...you can't oversee the importance of that.” It also helped that Broad prepares you for the new work context by being “pretty honest about it.” One interviewee shared, “In some ways, at the beginning of it I thought they were overselling how tough certain things were going to be. Now I think that it's a pretty honest assessment.”

ii. Staff Support During the Residency

Once in the residency, the Broad Center provides a great deal of staff support to ensure Broad Residents are successful. Individuals reported “the people who run the program...really made a big positive difference for me, at a time when I needed them to. When I really needed to be talked off the ledge...when I really needed their help in being advocates for me.” More than one person shared that Broad staff helped at critical junctures, including when they were entertaining the idea of leaving their placements. Staff helped in “thinking things through” and acting as a “sounding board.” Residents are

assigned a staff advisor; one interviewee reported that his advisor was “phenomenal at just being supportive and always there to talk.”

iii. Support from the Network of Peers/Colleagues

For some, the Broad network provided great collegial support. In a couple districts with greater concentrations of Broad Residents, interviewees explained how crucial it was to have that collegiality. They described get-togethers and a “support system” that exists. Depending on the number of Broad Residents – and the history of their presence in the district – there may even be unique structures set up to support their work, including a district representative, a Broad alum, who can act as a bit of a coordinator and thought partner. With colleagues, there are opportunities to “balance ideas out” even if they don’t work in the same department but to ask, “Hey I have this issue, what do you think?” and act as “indirect collaborative partners.” For individuals placed in districts with other Broad Residents, they appreciated having the “camaraderie of other people who are going through the same thing, really.”

One person explained how some of his cohort-mates are his biggest strength in getting through challenging career moments. He shared, “I still have 3 cohort members that I went through the darkest point of my career with...I call [them] and pretty much break down, say I can't do this anymore...They talk me off the ledge and help me out.”

iv. Quarterly Sessions and Annual Broad Center Forum

In addition to the staff and colleague support provided by The Broad Center, there are structures in place that encourage current and former Broad

Residents to get together, learn from one another, and connect. For current Residents, there are quarterly cohort meetings, which provide opportunities for Residents to visit cities and learn education-specific content. This content is organized into four key areas: Foundations of Urban Education, Strategic Transformation of School Systems, Leadership Development, and Organizational Change. With this curriculum, Broad has recently become accredited to award a masters degree in educational leadership to Residents who complete the full requirements. Programs include guest presenters who address special topics related to the curriculum.

Interviewees reported these quarterly meetings as very supportive and “important.” One interviewee explained that the “time away...with cohort mates and just having that structure where we’re talking to each other and talking about some challenges and some successes and building ideas off each other was really helpful...having the time away to be able to focus on the larger picture of why we’re in this space to begin with was important.”

The specific content resonated with people too. One interviewee explained how Broad helped him rethink his “leadership practices and how I work” and that the cohort meetings provided time to “talk about a lot of issues.” Similarly, another interviewee shared the importance of skill development, including thinking through leadership styles, which was a “toolbox” she “built a little bit and it helped uncover things that may have been uncomfortable” to previously address. Another person mentioned specific topics. He appreciated “the way [Broad] structured the sessions: one was on curriculum, one was on budget and finance, one was on race. They're kind of the topics at play in school

districts and...as somebody coming in from the outside, they were helpful to come up to speed, no doubt."

In addition, Broad hosts a "Broad Center Forum" annually for all Broad Residents and alumni. (In fact, several of these interviews were conducted during one of these forums.) Especially those people interviewed while at the forum described a real jolt they feel, which gets them out of whatever they've been doing, connecting with other people and feeling "re-energized." One person explained how the Broad connection in general is a huge support and it helps him "stay energized. I know I never miss a forum. I stay involved with Broad as much as humanly possible just because I love it. I come to anything they invite me to just because these things probably re-energize me [the] most." That spark comes from the sharing of ideas and experiences with colleagues, exposure to practices and ideas across the country, and presentations of thought-provoking ideas. At the most recent forum, one topic that was presented had to do with citywide collaboration to support education and discussion about whether districts alone can manage the undertaking of what's necessary to improve educational outcomes. The docket included speakers on this topic and more than one interviewee alluded to content that was being presented during the weekend as inspiring new thoughts. One person shared that the panel discussions during the forum "get you to think about your work and get a new perspective." He mentioned it also helps him stay "close to my cohort, that network."

v. Executive Coaching

A few people alluded to the relationship they had with the executive coach that is assigned to them during the residency – and anyone that mentioned their coach, *really* liked their coach (or as one person explained, “Mine was more like an executive therapist a lot of the time.”) Two interviewees identified their coach as the support that stood out the most, with one person explaining that he “meets with [his coach] almost every six weeks.” One interviewee emphasized the importance of “having the coach talk about here’s what I’m facing out there.”

b. Feeling Successful, Commitment to the Work, and Making an Impact

While interviewees reflected and reminisced about some of their more challenging – and compelling – times in district work, their eyes lit up when they talked about the successes of the work in which they were engaged. Feelings of success and making an impact are clearly one of the key aspects that keep people engaged in this work, in spite of all the challenges.

i. Improving Student Outcomes/Increasing Graduation Rates

At a high level, several people mentioned a gradually increasing graduation rate and a decreasing dropout rate in the districts in which they work as being a very specific indicator of the success of the work. People spoke in percentages and talked about how “thousands of kids are now getting a diploma each year” and more than one person spoke about attending graduation ceremonies as a real source of pride and inspiration, particularly for those

engaged in initiatives that directly support getting students over the finish line. One interviewee shared, “You get excited about everyone that succeeds.”

Two interviewees stated that they are keenly aware of being a part of an improving district, and they felt well positioned as a part of that effort. They were excited about the direction and spoke about staying committed and seeing it through, serving as a national example of what works. One of them stated that he couldn't wait for the time when “we tell all the politicians and all the people who [doubted us] that we were right and we've proven it. That every kid can move. I've always had this vision that I don't want to leave [the district] until we prove that we're right and we are so far from it right now even though we've had scores go up and things like that. I don't want to leave until we have that done.”

ii. Being a Problem Solver, Influencer or Decision Maker

Opportunities to lead were highlighted again and again, both in relation to playing a role in specific strategic initiatives, as well as having a seat at the table for some high-level problem solving and decision-making. In some cases, individuals were able to participate in the development of a strategic direction for the district. One person talked about preparing information for senior leaders and described his role as creating, “a rock solid recommendation that no one can punch holes in analytically.” Another interviewee described that role as “feeding data to [leaders] basically and information and thinking with different creative solutions, great. That's exactly what I want to do.” Another person shared, “I was at the table for a lot of exciting decisions and issues and challenges. I think that kept me going to some degree,” and another shared a similar sentiment, “I had a lot of power and controlling the flow of information” which

made him feel like he was part of the “behind the scenes” work in helping the district identify the strategic path to improvement and “helping drive” it.

In terms of decisions, interviewees shared satisfying instances of being able to impact the financial situation in a district. One person shared that people “very much respected [me] because I did a job that no one thinks they could have done” in saving the district from near-financial ruin. In another case, an interviewee described being able to “generate over [a million dollars] in cost savings without having to cut any staff, programs, or services” – which was a major accomplishment.

Interviewees also talked about the implications of some of these important political and financial decisions in improving educational opportunities or outcomes for students. More than one person talked about ensuring there are quality schools in all neighborhoods and one interviewee pointed to a moment in time when he read a list names of students that were able to select to attend a higher performing school, thus making them “much more likely to go to a four year college and have the same opportunities that you and I have had.” Another interviewee explained, “I get to work on strategy. I get to do all the forward-looking stuff that I believe in. I guess that's the other thing I think that's really evolved for me. I now have a point of view about what it takes to turn around schools, to improve the school district.”

iii. Leading Initiatives and Teams

Many interviewees talked excitedly about how they feel successful in developing and leading important initiatives. The kinds of topics and programs individuals were leading varied greatly, and they spoke specifically about

leadership, as well as outcomes. One interviewee explained the importance of this: “If I worked on a project, I could actually see it through and see the difference that I made.” He pointed to one experience in which he was participating in a project that was about “trying to change [silo mentality and too much separation ‘between the work I do and how it impacts students’] and I was excited to be a part of that.”

Several people alluded to efforts to bring “data” into important conversations, covering everything from disproportionality in suspensions to monitoring and making decisions about school performance and interventions. With pride, one person shared the outcome of enhancing conversations with data and that “over the years, we saw a dramatic decrease in suspensions overall. I think we still saw some disproportionality, but I think just the awareness that we brought, and the conversations we had, because we would have conversations around the data.” Other people that helped the district shift to more data-driven conversations talked about how this helped change the “nature” of the conversation.

Despite the concern over losing their business skills, interviewees also discussed how the district work helped in ways to embellish previous experience in the areas of finance, technology, strategy, and communications. One person explained, “I feel much more confident going into any type of organization and helping them through the strategic planning process. That's been very good.” Another person talked about a “per pupil” funding pilot he helped to lead. He explained that the current model in the district was “inequitable” and that the goal was to ensure schools were basically paying for the caliber or experience level of teachers. In another budget example, one person pointed out that

working directly with schools to “budget more strategically...has an impact on student achievement.”

Some interviewees focused on instructional or academic reforms, with many people supporting groups of students with unique needs. For example, one person talked about supporting more non-traditional educational experiences to ensure “everybody [could] have a working life experience” and that student feedback on the program was “one of those things that keep me going.” She explained, “Students write [to us] and say things like, ‘This opportunity, it’s great. Here’s what I’ve learned and here’s where I am going and I can’t wait to go back.’”

The experience of leading teams was also a theme, with focus on developing a strong team through collaboration and seeing work blossom. One person shared her positive experience in leading a team. “I love what I’m doing now...and I have a great team. They’re really smart like we get a lot of stuff done and it’s all going really well. I love like being able to drive the strategic direction of all these things and the design behind them...” Another interviewee spoke about the “commitment to not just kids and the work, but to people [on my team] and another pointed to the challenge of “just pulling the best from each person.” She continued, “I think that, especially the last two and a half years, having built a team from scratch and seen where we’ve come and seeing the progress we’ve made...we were actually this year embarking on work that has never been done in this way. Thinking, being able to be creative again, was what kept me [going].”

iv. New Learning

Finally, interviewees pointed to feeling successful when they learned new skills and ideas and when they received feedback about quality performance. Entering the sector from the outside provides many opportunities for gaining knowledge in new areas and arenas. For example, one person shared, “I’ve gotten a lot of practice in the politics and the communications and the issues, the social issues.” Another interviewee explained, “I can talk the talk of an educator in a way that I would not have been able to do. Personally, that’s been rewarding.” One person identified the opportunities for continuous improvement. “One of the things we’ve done well, is now that we have examples of how things work or don’t work...we have the ability to draw on those lessons learned and replicate them.” Finally, interviewees shared about moments when their contributions are recognized. “I think that they were happy with the level of the work and they were happy with the speed with which I learned things. They had always told me that they were satisfied.” Another person described an email exchange between senior leaders discussing his work, saying, “Yes this is definitely an example of great work.”

Ultimately the successes described above lead back to the reasons individuals made the switch in the first place: to make an impact. One interviewee summed this up well by explaining, “I feel like I am right at the point where I can make huge impacts. In fact, I have more responsibility than I ever did at [in any of my positions in the past] combined...all other jobs combined do not even equate to where I am today. My impact, on the economy, on people’s lives is so much greater now than it would have been otherwise.”

c. Supportive Home/Personal Life

A third common area of supports emerged, albeit a bit smaller than the first two categories, and this was in the area of home life. Interviewees spoke to the importance of a supportive partner, the routine of family life, and trying to seek balance by pursuing outside interests.

i. Spouse/Partner and Family Life

Nearly half of the men interviewed spoke of their wife or girlfriend as “a huge source of support and reassurance,” one whose wife was “game” for the transitions and another who helps him be more “down to Earth.” One interviewee spoke about how his girlfriend also works in education and how they “support each other” because “we understand.” He explained, “We lived it, we know what it’s like to be first-generation college students.” They know what the “pitfalls” are and together, “feel we have a purpose to work in this area.” Another person spoke about family life as keeping him grounded. “That routine with my family and my kids, I get so much joy out of that and strength, so that’s the number one support I have in place,” he explained.

ii. Outside Interests

Another interviewee spoke more about a shift he made within the last few years where he doesn’t “aspire to burn myself out and work myself into the ground. I aspire to have more balance. I’ve gotten involved in other things.” These things include getting training as an athlete and competing in events, as well as volunteering. He said, “I feel I have more to offer when I’m there at work because I’m more balanced.”

Part II: Themes Specific To Previous Professional Background

The shared perspectives on the transition generally and the descriptions of challenges and supports are telling in terms of the themes this study presents. The differences between the two groups of individuals is also compelling. To begin to address the “differences” between individuals with a consulting background and individuals with a corporate background, it is again helpful to consider the notion of “fit” – both in terms of skill set and culture. In other words, how compatible is a former consultant’s or former corporate manager’s skill set with what is required at a school district? What are the experiences of each of these groups in the corporate culture and the consulting firm culture that lend themselves to the next context? These findings help take the overall theme of adding value and the transferability of the skill set and add more nuance. While there are many skills and assets that transfer from the business context to the education administration context, there do remain some gap areas for each group related to their background and previous experiences.

Appendix C. provides an outline and overview of these findings. The following narrative provides a full description of the items in the outline and is organized identically to the first two levels of the outline, by Arabic numbers and lower-case letters. These were the themes common for study participants based on an individual’s specific background in business.

1. The Skill Set “Fit” for Former Consultants

Skills that were easily transferrable for consultants really broke into three areas: using data to sell ideas or solve a problem, improving processes (or putting processes in place), and managing change.

a. Selling Ideas With Data

In general, all interviewees had a self-described interest in solving problems, but for consultants more than corporate managers, discussion about the transferability of previous experience to current experience revolved mostly around this topic. In this case, people spoke specifically about powers of persuasion and using data to tell an objective story, to help an organization arrive at the best possible result. One interviewee described it as, taking “a very simple question and to go to such an nth degree of detail” and another described it as “being able to build an argument from data.”

One former consultant really painted the picture of what it takes “to sell a project” and to figure out “who the power players were in order to get funding and approval on all that stuff and executive sponsorship.” He continued, “That was a thought process that, the only reason I think I really was savvy to was because I’d been in consulting. Then, how to frame the argument, creating up some snazzy slides. How to use PowerPoint. How to present in a compelling and confident fashion. All those things. The only reason I [had the skills to do this], I think is because I was a consultant.”

b. Setting Up Processes

On a highly related note, many people spoke to setting up processes for improving workflow or making decisions. Put simply by one interviewee, “I think the skill sets from consulting are like project management, analytical skills, strategic planning...systems level thinking.” Noted in the challenges, this is an area that was characterized as lacking in education. One person emphasized the importance of bringing project management skills to the district because “people

leave meetings and talk about what they are going to do next, talk about their rest of the day but [it is not] clear who is going to do what, when, so just really some basic milestones, deliverables, timelines, resources, just some core project management work.”

In addition to projects plans or “work plans” other interviewees talked about how process development sometimes starts from scratch, and how project scope and expectations had to be managed. In consulting, one person shared, that his small team “started from nothing. We had to create this process of how we’re going to tackle the problem for the client.” Consultants spoke with pride about these skills and the importance of them in improving work. Another interviewee shared, “the skills I learned, some of the techniques, those principles were directly applicable in [the district] as well. Different industry, different projects but those things are transferable. I could bring those to bear on [district-related] projects” as well as “just managing project scope. Scope, expectations of executives, to the executive team, all that stuff.” He explained his ability to do that came “directly all out of my consulting experience.”

c. Change Management

Due to the nature of the above activities, making decisions and improving processes, managing change was also an important skill mentioned by several former consultants. This makes sense in terms of the timing, as one person explained, “I felt that we were posing changes that the organization simply was not ready to undertake.” Even though she “learned the hard skills of taking large organizations through strategic planning or taking them through a large scale change with regards to their processes,” she continued “there's always this

element of changing people. How do you get someone who always moves left to suddenly move right? [This] is a skill that takes a long time to develop.” Another person discussed his “love” for change management, “working with people, brainstorming ideas. I love the new ideas, I love working on a team to get it done, I like learning how to present an idea in different ways, I like the analysis.” He went on to explain how this applies to district work. “I don't believe there's a right answer to help kids learn. I think it's multiple answers and you have to be open to new ideas. My mind's always open. I'm not aggressive, I don't push something.” Instead he developed the skill set to work with stakeholders to come to an answer collaboratively. He reported this as a strong asset in district work.

2. Culture “Fit” for Former Consultants

Related to the theme on change management, consultants spoke about the cultural orientation of their work and having a high level of comfort working with all sorts of people, including those they didn't know, learning content with which they weren't previously familiar, as well as being in a context that was different every time. This agility, they explained, made it easy for them to move into the education sector with some degree of comfort that they would learn what they needed, but that their skills in developing relationships to get the work done would still be relevant. However, some consultants shared concerns about working on teams they perceived as mixed in terms of individual's effort and effectiveness in the district context.

a. New Clients

Consulting work can entail meeting with new clients frequently, and several of them talked about how this experience lends itself to moving to a new sector. One person explained, “what’s most important is the soft skills. In business school, I took a course in negotiating strategies, negotiation marketing, communication, organizational design” and he has found this information as some of the most valuable in both his work as a consultant, as well as an education administrator. Another person explained that his work always starts “with forming relationships, just going into their offices and saying, ‘Hey, how’s it going? Let’s talk.’” Another emphasized the excitement of going somewhere new: “I actually like the idea of going someplace where I don’t really know a lot and I have to think on my feet and get up to speed quickly. “

One interviewee elaborated on this, by explaining the process. “You are going into an organization that you know very little about and trying to help them out. There is a degree of hubris involved in that operation. The way [consulting companies] manage that is by having folks really spend time on the client site and really trying to do a lot of listening. I think that was actually good preparation for public education.” A final point on this topic was that because of the nature of many consulting projects, as being driven by senior leaders in an organization, some interviewees specifically reported that those experiences allowed them to feel comfortable interacting with new people, regardless of title or seniority. One interviewee shared that when he first arrived in the district and since he was new to the city, he really didn’t know who the political players were. “There was some anxiety about that” since his role was going to be working with these people, “but that was my whole career, was new clients. I’m not really

intimidated by senior clients. I met CEOs all the time. I don't get nervous around senior people. On day two, meeting with our superintendent, even though I didn't even have a laptop or anything, I was fine with that.”

b. Strong Teams/Teammates

Most former consultants emphasized the high capacity of their former consulting firms and spoke highly of their former colleagues and teammates. They spoke of the high “caliber” and the quality of the work, and working with very “smart” people. One person explained that he has always worked with “smart” people. “I feel day-to-day, I work with people who are smart. That was one of the things that people at [my former consulting group] do like about [working there]. Even people that leave [that consulting group], they'll always reflect positively about how they liked working with their coworkers and how they learned from them. That's a support, the extent that you have that in your organization.”

A few former consultants also spoke about high levels of collaboration among their consulting teams, demonstrated by this strong faith in the team effort: “I never once had an instance where a colleague held back a piece of information from me or was competing with me as opposed to working together to solve a problem. Never once.” He felt that high level of trust and collaboration helped the team deliver high quality work to their clients. Clearly, the strength of the consulting team was something consultants admired about their previous work. On the other hand, district teams, some of them shared, did not always function as smoothly, composed of a combination of higher achieving leaders, as well as individuals that were – at least perceived as – not high

performing or committed to going the extra mile. These differences in team composition is an example of a cultural difference between the two contexts.

3. Skill Set “Fit” for Former Corporate Managers

While consultants focused a great deal on building processes and managing change from the outside, individuals with a corporate background talked more about their efforts to create a more effective organization from the inside out.

a. Organizational Dynamics: Managing Teams, Being Managed

Corporations are large organizations of people, so a big part of the skill set of working in a corporation has to do with being on a team and managing other people, often in a supervisory position. Individuals from corporate emphasized the influence of their experiences to value “getting the right people in the right roles, and providing them supports and holding them accountable and doing some troubleshooting and thinking about the next move.” One person explained how the importance of this can’t be underestimated because as business grows “your focus is less on actually executing on the task” and rather on supporting others and “creating the conditions” for them to do the work, underscoring the importance “of culture and systems and structures.” In summary, this requires a skill set that involves “building a team from scratch; building out culture, and systems, and structures; dealing with risk and failure; failing forward, and how to do that effectively.” It was shared that these were all critical ingredients to leading a team in a corporation, lessons they felt were applicable to leading a team in the district context.

When working in corporate America, one has to be able to deal with personnel changes, as well. One person described that during his eight plus years at a corporation, he had “20 different managers. All of them had their own management style.” He also “managed thousands of people...and had to get them all at the same page.” With this much people experience, he essentially became an expert in “organizational behavior.” In another example, one interviewee talked about the importance of working with people on-the-ground in the corporate environment in order to do his job effectively. He explained, “It was about getting out there and working with folks [that were actually executing the services]. I really loved that part of the work; really working with folks, improving our [practices that are the mission] of our organization.”

The same interviewee talked about a popular practice in his corporation called “management by walking around.” He explained, “It was really about getting out there, so it’s not just sitting in the office; really listening to people, and trying to figure out what their needs are, and how do you work to meet those needs? That’s one of the things I tried to incorporate in my work [in the school district].” This is an important point that will get more attention in the following section comparing individuals with different business backgrounds and its application in the district environment.

In addition, interviewees shared that working in corporate America gave them the opportunity to learn “organizational behavior of how to advance and how to...navigate the appropriate political games in our organization” which included “exposure to senior leadership” at a very young age. Corporate interviewees frequently talked about the organizational and human resource savvy with which one must approach their corporate work, and that knowing

how this works is helpful when transitioning to the district, also a large (and very political) organization. The skills of managing teams, developing other people, and even managing up (with frequent changes) were identified as skills that are important and applicable in both the education and corporate contexts. As one person put it, the “organizational behavior” in the two contexts is similar and that made it easier in terms of the transition. “Organizational dynamics are universal around how people interact and work with each other” and this helps you as a leader “determine the right things to do, and then influence folks to then go out and make that happen. I think that's universal.” In general, individuals felt that corporate skill set was a good fit in transitioning to education. One person shared, “The work that I was doing was no different than what I was doing in other places. It just was for a different purpose and outcome.”

b. Diverse Roles

Individuals that worked in corporate America represented an astonishingly wide breadth of tasks and responsibilities. Managing people to manage and execute work was obviously a key role, but the actual type of work in which people were engaged was quite diverse. At a very high level, this group was diverse in terms of their pre-corporate background, with bachelor degrees ranging from engineering to accounting to business. Also at a high level, the roles people took on in the corporate environment ranged from banking to product manufacturing to service providers. The kinds of tasks individuals discussed ranged from “looking at the root cause” of a problem with manufacturing of a product to “managing everything from organizational structure to product line structure, to financial structure...[helping with]

presentations for the CEO” to leading focus groups and doing on-the-ground market research. Individuals working in product manufacturing and services spoke about spending time in the field to better understand how specific processes or decisions are playing out. They discussed “strategic reviews, strategic analysis,” “tech and entrepreneurial” work, as well as data and analytics.

Three of the corporate interviewees had participated in formal management programs in their first years on the job, with programming that emphasized leadership. One person explained, “they believe in rotating, so you get experience in different areas. A lot of that work dealt with really working with people.” Because of this, they would speak to specific, intentional leadership practices and discussed collaboration at length. One person explained how she relied on some of this training in the district context when soliciting team feedback, “I pulled back on my old [corporate] training of listening. What’s going wrong? Tell me what’s going on. I used that process of management versus directive. It was more collaborative, because I’m just collaborative. I don’t believe I know the right answer. I’m so not the expert at this, you are. Let me pull what’s best.” Interviewees shared how these kinds of practices helped them be successful in meeting the multiple demands and diverse roles in a large organization, and are thus very practical in school district administrative work.

Even individuals who had not participated in management programs discussed how corporate training focused far more on developing leadership capacity than they did on the content of the business – which they described as the opposite of education, where the focus is usually on the content of education rather than leadership practices. One person said, “In the business unit I was in,

there was a strong focus on leadership development and I felt that I had opportunities to grow as a leader” and that “technical expertise was gained on the job.” He continued, “I think that is one difference I see between my experience at [the corporation and working at the school district].”

4. Culture “Fit” for Former Corporate Managers

In general, interviewees that came from a corporate background were more used to clarity of goals and working in an organization that was focused on results. They reported that this differed from their school district work.

a. Clear Direction/Bottom Line

If one thing stood out culturally about working in a corporation it was this idea of everyone in the organization working together and headed in the same direction with a clear understanding of the ultimate goal or goals. The clarity of purpose was an appealing aspect of working in corporate America – even when that ultimate goal (“generating cash flow to drive stock prices”) wasn’t that appealing on a more philosophical level. With the “end goal, of course, to make money,” there were “very clear black and white objectives.”

Interviewees shared that the bottom line as the end goal helped people stay “focused on results because if they didn’t hit the results, they weren’t making money. Right?” Another person shared how there were many strong systems in place to determine if “we hit the mark” because “producing results was critical.” Therefore, the “culture” is “very performance-driven because we’re a publicly-traded company and we are accountable to our investors, for short-term results.” Another interviewee emphasized continuous improvement

and explained how “in a manufacturing line, there will be interim steps” and that you are always “checking tolerances.” That way, by the time the process gets implemented, “you know that you have a good product because you’ve tested through the process.”

Even though the bottom line came up several times, this wasn’t the only focus of working in an organization with a clear mission and vision. From individual’s descriptions of their life in corporate America, it was easy to get a real sense of what it was like to work in each corporation, the emphasis on leadership, the high quality training, and the focus of the products or services their companies were providing. One interviewee explained, however, “I think that the culture though, in my opinion, this is where it becomes particularly subjective, lacked a deeper compelling vision or mission. Right? We’re there to make money at the end of the day, and we have to, and it’s secondarily, not first but secondarily. To make money, we need to provide a good service.”

Thus, individuals that came from corporate were used to a more clear direction, but typically did not find that in a school district. One person provided a fitting explanation of this finding. He said, “Sometimes, the corporation is bigger than the individuals, in the sense that sometimes I may feel like districts are an embodiment of the people that work there. Whoever is in charge of that at the time, that’s what the feeling is like working there, rather than maybe in corporations or some businesses, it’s really not even about the person in charge, because that system’s already there. Even if that person leaves, and a new person gets put in, that system still runs.” Interviewees explained one of the main differences between corporate life and school district life is the clarity of goals and consistency of mission over time. According to the corporate

management interviewees, it was clearly a benefit to work in an organization that was clear on these and helped steer everyone in a common direction.

Some corporate interviewees emphasized entrepreneurial or innovative opportunities working within corporations. With clarity and “probably more of a sense by and large, of how your work contributed to the bottom line,” some interviewees described the culture as “open” in terms of identifying processes, making decisions, and pursuing next steps. Several individuals framed their role more like that of an “internal consultant” in a corporate environment with a high degree of flexibility to identify gaps or next steps. A different take on this same concept circles back to the idea that corporate work is ultimately about teamwork. One interviewee shared, “I saw myself as sort of inventing myself at work, with the folks, and working with them to accomplish whatever goal we have set.”

Another way of looking at this difference in clarity of mission is that corporate workers spoke about the customer. One person explained that in bringing this idea up of customer service at the district, “it was startling to see people just kind of taken aback by, ‘Why are you asking me that?’ I’m like, ‘We’re here to serve our customers. That’s why we’re here’” – but there remains loose understanding of that actual purpose of the work at the district, and so who the customers are and how to be of service would be accordingly ambiguous.

5. Strengths/Successes for Former Consultants

In this section, the “strengths/successes” are the focus rather than “supports,” which was the category in the shared themes. The rationale is that

strengths help one be successful (and “being successful” was identified as a key support). It would then follow that qualities that help individuals find that kind of success should also be considered a support. Thus, the terms strength and support are interchangeable in this context.

a. Strategy and Influence

As related to success, the main areas of “fit” identified for former consultants help them find success in certain areas of administrative work. First and foremost, this has to do with strategic thinking. Described previously, consultants feel they come with a skill set that is strong in analyzing conditions, putting together a compelling argument and then garnering buy-in, particularly at senior levels. This analysis and these ideas have the potential to influence the direction of the entire organization.

With all these perceived assets, former consultants talked about their strategy work as “all about design, advising and helping” which also included developing “team norms and structures” or mapping the process. One interviewee summed it up by explaining how consultants tend to be “really smart and we can dive in and diagnose a scenario.” There is a significant comfort, also, with diving into new content or new contexts, as this versatility was key in consulting life. Interviewees felt this skill set is important in a large urban district setting where problems-of-the-day abound and the political nature of decisions often deter the system from progress. One person commented, “I don't think we have a teaching and learning problem. I think we have a governance problem and so it doesn't require a teaching and learning solution. It

requires a systematic solution. We're not one teaching strategy away from fixing our problems."

6. Challenges for Former Consultants

a. Implementation

While former consultants discussed strengths in strong in analysis and problem solving, many consultant interviewees identified implementation as a bit of an unexpected Achilles heel. Most of them described successfully delivering strategies, recommendations, and decisions in their consulting lives, but that they "didn't really have to pay a lot of attention to the implementation because the true consultant, you come in, you spend some time, you do the study, you figure out what's going on, you write your report, you write your recommendations and presto. You give it to the account and then you fly home." Another person explained, "I had never executed anything...that's stuff other people do. I just strategize." In a district setting, however, there are few roles that are purely strategy roles. Most leaders and managers are involved, to a greater or lesser extent, in the business of implementing.

One interviewee explained the difference this way. In consulting "when you go to your client, you go sit in a conference room, hidden on the top floor, right next to the CEO's office because they don't want anyone seeing you, they don't want anyone seeing what you're printing out about what you're going to close or who you're going to fire or and all that. [The school district] was the opposite" in that "it was all about relationships." Without having much experience on how to engage multiple levels of stakeholders to move forward with implementation, some consultants found this part of school district

administration challenging.

The same interviewee continued reflecting on the power of being able to “take the fancy power point strategy sessions from the consultants and help bridge it between pie-in-the-sky and the people on the ground.” He explained, “The people on the ground don't believe that anything new can be done. [And] the pie-in-the-sky don't realize the concept of change management.” He lamented on his learning curve, “The bridge in the middle, I should have been able to see both sides” when he was leading his initial project with the district.

A few other former consultants reflected on why it is a “good skill set to know the whole picture.” One interviewee talked about how she hired consultants for support in developing a district initiative. She explained, they “did not know anything about education. Along the way I just kept seeing how things sound really great on paper, but I don't know how they're going to work in terms of implementation at the site level. So it was really interesting for me because I could see for the first time what it was like to be on the consulting team but then being left behind and seeing what happens when you actually implement what the consultants laid out.” She also identified a “fatal flaw” in this particular project had to do with communications with key stakeholder groups, similar to above.

Another former consultant explained that she gravitated toward her particular consulting firm because they actually did have an emphasis on being the bridge, in that “your role [was] always to try to make your role obsolete. You're always pulling back and making things go as much as you can until it's obsolete and you can go to what's next. It's always the way that I worked. I prefer that way over just to drop and go.” Because she valued “at least [having]

my hand in there a little bit to be supportive,” she appreciated the approach of making “your role obsolete” over ‘Here's the binder. Good luck with doing that.’”

7. Strengths/Successes for Former Corporate Managers

In this section, supports and strengths/successes are again used interchangeably.

a. Implementation

Interestingly, a main strength or success area of corporate managers is indeed the converse of the above challenge area for former consultants. Former corporate leaders talked at length about the criticality of getting on the ground to really understand needs and ensure connections are being made from bottom to top. Individuals that worked in product manufacturing or services in their previous work environment provided many examples of the connection between strategy and implementation. Often, these leaders spent a lot of time on the ground really trying to understand how decisions were playing out or impacting practice. One interviewee explained the benefit of being a strategist within a corporation is that “not only are you thinking about the changes that need to be made, but you're also thinking about how to implement it.”

Another interviewee contrasted his vantage as “being completely different” from a consultant because he is very operational and executional...Around the world of execution there’s a time to stop talking and creating processes and mapping out work plans and what have you. There’s a time to make it happen. The doors are open.” Consultants “set you up...so that you can open the door. I’m the guy who opens the door and deals with whoever comes in the door.” He

explained how this plays out in the district context: “It’s one thing to sit and plan the system. That is one activity. The other activity is to develop standards and practices for [it]. That is actual implementation because you’re actually getting into the work and you’re starting to monitor and manage it.” He also emphasized that in the district it’s a “weird idea that the only implementation is actually teaching. That’s actually not true because there’s a whole bunch of other implementation that must happen in order for the teaching to happen.”

Corporate managers talked a lot about getting on the ground and actually doing the work of implementation – and doing it with the implementers, such as riding the truck or the train, working in the warehouse, spending time with the “hourly” workers that execute the services. One interviewee explained that in his role as a manager, he saw himself as “management and labor, both. Everyone was management and labor. The moment you were hired, you were management, you were a management trainee, but you were also the labor force” in that he was actually doing a lot of the on-the-ground implementation alongside his team members. Another corporate manager explained, “I really try and embed myself in the work, with the folks that I’m working with,” using an example of doing work that involved physical labor. He explained, “In my experience, I stayed where I was, and worked with the folks in my organization, top to bottom, for a number of years,” which is a contrast to consultants, who are more so “just coming in and providing expertise on [a] topic.” He explained further, “That was our work at [the corporation], literally implementing.” He added, “I never really thought about that.” This focus also helps orient the process to be customer-focused, and customer-centered thinking came up a few

times among former corporate managers, viewing principals as the customers central office serves, and that supporting them is key to supporting schools.

Previously mentioned, there are some mixed perspectives on working with educators or “hourly folks” at the school district. In the corporate context, managers spoke mostly of having a high regard for those doing the work and found it “exciting” to work with “hourly employees and folks that got to wear jeans to work.” One person explained that he also “worked a third shift and worked hard and took on stuff folks didn’t want to do.” This experience helped him to “gain credibility” as a corporate manager and it is “something that’s carried on through my career,” including in the transition to education administration. He also mentioned the unique vantage of being able to “see components come together” in corporate work and how “that was fun.”

8. Challenges for Former Corporate Managers

a. Constantly Changing Direction

Most corporate managers described an experience of relative stability and consistency in corporate America. It was mentioned previously how corporate culture can remain steady in the face of change; school district work is the exact opposite of that. While all transitioners described that moving target as challenging, it is very unsettling for someone who experienced a more grounded and clear experience in a large organization. Though not a significant finding, it helps to further illuminate how differences in background may play a role in current district work.

Conclusion

There were some common themes among interviewees regardless of previous background. In general, they found their skill sets from previous work experiences quite applicable; culturally, they fit in with an environment that was mission-driven. They also felt their experience in building relationships helped them navigate and quickly learn the new environment when they transitioned to their new work context.

They also identified some significant challenges: challenges with the political influence on the education system, particularly large urban districts and challenges working in a context that lacks accountability and performance management systems. Additionally, interviewees found challenges in their own professional profile or identity in a new sector and reflected on some of their concerns and questions about their current work and possibilities for the future.

Likewise, interviewees had several common viewpoints about the supports that were in place to help them be successful, most of which centered on the supports provided by The Broad Center and on their own feelings of success and personal impact. Some individuals also mentioned their home or personal life as playing a role in creating a safety net or providing support.

Obviously, there is a great deal of overlap between the experiences of career transitioners with a consulting background and those with a corporate background, shared in the previous chapter. Namely, as one interviewee explained, “it’s very similar in the sense that you are somewhat considered an outsider.”

Deeper analysis in this area revealed that an individual’s experiences or background may actually position him or her for success with certain types of

tasks or roles, as well as with a major learning curve for tasks that don't quite align with previous experiences. In other words, there were unique common characteristics identified about the transition in the backgrounds of individuals with consulting experience and those with corporate experience. Consultants enter the transition with strong experience in strategy and problem solving, and working with teams (often senior) to move the organization toward its goals. Corporate managers have more experience managing large teams of diverse individuals in a wide range of roles, including those people that actually have a direct hand in production or providing services. Therefore, they are very strong on the implementation side of the work.

An additional summary of these points is included in the conclusions chapter, which also focuses on the practical implications from the findings in this study, specifically in regard to individual and organizational decision-making and practices.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

Overview

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of individuals who made a transition from business to education administration through The Broad Residency, to examine how transitioners think about and understand this experience, and whether the experience may be different for individuals with different backgrounds in business, specifically corporate management versus business consulting. A conceptual framework that highlights features of a successful transition helped to organize and contextualize interview data to achieve the study's purpose in deepening understanding of these transitions. Indeed many of the findings in this study are consistent with the research presented in the conceptual framework section, including such ideas as the applicability of previous skills to a new work environment, altruistic reasons that drive a career transition to education, and the unique perspective someone with a nontraditional background brings to the education sector.

Through the lenses of "fit" in terms of skill set and cultural expectations of the work place and the balance of challenges and supports interviewees' are finding in the district context, we get a sense of a career transition that involves some significant challenges due to politics and bureaucracy, but that the relevant skills, mission-driven orientation, and satisfaction of making a difference in the lives of students are key influencers in an individual's success in making the transition. This chapter highlights this study's conclusions and summarizes "advice" to individuals considering making a transition and to institutions, organizations, and districts that support transitioners.

Conclusions

This study, an expanded version of a pilot study on this topic, confirmed the earlier study's findings while building a more complex picture of what business-to-education administration transitions entail for individuals that make their transition through The Broad Residency. Again, to build this picture, the study uses a framework that highlights what a successful transition might look like – a good “fit” in terms of skills and cultural expectations and a good balance of challenges and supports. From this study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

In regard to “fit:”

- Business-to-education administration career transitioners feel, in general, that the skills they developed in the business sector (including graduate school) are a good “fit” for school district administration. These skills include: problem solving and data analysis; working efficiently and with a commitment to high quality work, having an “outsider” perspective to raise unique concerns, comfort with nimble or ambiguous positioning to explore different facets of or problems in the organization.
- Former consultants felt their strongest skill sets were in the areas of data, process and project management, and managing change in an organization. Former corporate managers indicated they have strong experience with organizational dynamics, particularly managing teams and being managed. Corporate backgrounds varied widely, but study participants noted that the emphasis on leadership practices within corporate culture provided them skills applicable in the district setting.
- Business-to-education administration career transitioners felt a “fit” in the mission-driven nature of school districts. Study participants also spoke a great deal about the relationship-oriented culture of districts, with varying degrees of comfort in this area. Many people explained that their previous experiences in managing relationships help set them up well to “read” an organization, but there was also some difficulty identified in working on mixed-background teams and struggles with one's boss.
- Former consultants noted feeling comfortable moving into a new environment since they were constantly taking on new clients in their previous work. They were also used to high caliber teams, not always that same experience at the district. Corporate managers talked about their previous work environment in corporate, appreciating the clarity of purpose of the “bottom line” and a related performance culture and degree of flexibility to innovate, cultural features not so common in the district setting.

In regard to challenges and supports:

- Business-to-education administration transitioners noted significant challenges in moving to the district context, particularly with the political nature of public education (elected boards, superintendent turnover, power struggles) and the lack of accountability and performance systems, including clear mission and goal setting. Another challenge all transitioners reported facing had to do with their own professional lives, including concerns about their continued status as an “outsider,” career path limitations, craving more experiences in the field, and keeping their skills from the past relevant.
- The unique challenge former consultants spoke about had to do with moving from strategy to implementation, something many of them were not responsible for in their consultant roles. Former corporate managers mentioned the challenge of constantly changing direction, having come from corporate environments that were more or less stable in terms of focus or direction of the work.
- Business-to-education administration transitioners generally identified three main supports to staying in the work. They credited The Broad Residency / The Broad Center with providing them with support throughout the move to their new career, support during the residency, ongoing professional development opportunities, and support from their network or peers / colleagues. Some people mentioned their home life or outside interests in maintaining some semblance of balance as being important. The final support cannot be underestimated: an individual’s internal support, including commitment to the mission of public education, making impact, and feelings of success. By and large, this important source of support seems to override many of the significant challenges that exist.
- For former consultants, these feelings of success were most apparent in their ability to influence strategy and direction for the organization. Many former corporate managers talked about the satisfaction of being able to see a project through from the strategy phase to on-the-ground implementation. In other words, while consultants focused a great deal on building processes and managing change from the outside, individuals with a corporate background talked more about their efforts to create a more effective organization from the inside out.

In summary, the skills, the mission-orientation, and the personal satisfaction that comes from making a difference can result in a successful transition for individuals making the change from the business sector to education administration through The Broad Residency. In addition to the statistic that 90 percent of their graduates remain in K-12 education, a review of

materials from The Broad Center provided some additional evidence and statistics that they are meeting their mission of recruiting and placing leaders to support transformation in public education, which are shown in Appendix D. In addition, the examples shared by interviewees of their successes demonstrate that impact – raising, saving, and managing funding, influencing strategic direction, developing systems to increase efficiency, and more.

However, as Broad Residents are tasked with the major undertaking of transforming education, the depth and breadth of these challenges in school districts, which serve the majority of the nation's children, demonstrate the level of institutional dysfunction that make these systems ultimately difficult to reform. While some interviewees have found longer-term success and resilience in remaining in school districts, it was clear during the interviews that this work is not for everyone forever. In fact, in the group of individuals interviewed, one person has left a position at a school district and two indicated they were considering a departure. At the same time, there are other participants that have since been promoted to higher levels of leadership in the same or a new district.

This begs the question, when one makes this particular career change, to what extent is it the individual who changes to accommodate the role or organization, or is it the role or organization that changes because of a person's impact? Most writing on this topic explains that the change is mutual, that both "evolve interactively such that a new synthesis is achieved that is not simply a compromise of static role demands and static self demands" (Ashforth & Saks, 1995). Specific to this study, then, did interviewees perceive that the organization was open to change and welcomed their influence, or was the whole movement during transition towards assimilation into the organization?

Based on the findings in this study, that interactive evolution – that mutual change – is indeed generally true for individuals that make the transition from business to school districts through The Broad Residency. The details of that evolution – and the extent of the individual’s impact on or assimilation into the system – depends on role, personality, the district, the district context, and the challenges and supports. That experience is going to be unique to each person’s journey.

Implications

The assumption in this study is that leadership is absolutely critical and can make a huge difference in the improvement of our school districts. Our systems, therefore, stand to benefit from the human capital strategy in which The Broad Residency is engaged, recruiting passionate and hard-working leaders into leadership and management roles into the sector. So what can be done to ensure these transitions are successful?

From the findings that emerged in this study, the implications on practice fall into two key areas: considerations for prospective Broad Residents and considerations for organizations and institutions.

First, interviewees provided details about what individuals considering the transition should think about prior to making the changes, as well as once they enter the school system. They emphasized the need to have absolute clarity about making the transition, to understand the reasons why, and to have passion for it – and that the work in a school district will be harder than expected. Yet, the school district is the heart of the education sector, so by gaining experience in it, one really gets to understand what is at play and bring that learning to bear in

future endeavors. Interviewees also talked about the importance of self-advocating, finding the right role, organization, and sponsor for the Residency, and being intentional about this move in the big picture of a career. Additionally, the importance of being open to learning, working with others with different backgrounds, and having patience with the process was emphasized.

Also from the interviewee's own words, there are many things school systems and support organizations can do to provide strong professional opportunities for leaders to learn and grow. In general, these solutions are technical, straightforward, imply structural or programmatic change, and can be taken at face value. This could also have impact on if or how resources are allocated for these activities. The solutions can also be implemented piecemeal and be tailored to the specific context. This section offers systemic or institutional actions that can be taken to better support central office leaders that have transitioned from the business sector.

Advice to Prospective Transitioners Through The Broad Residency

Given the challenges and the possible successes, interviewees reflected on how prospective Broad Residents could benefit from their experiences. When asked directly what advice they would give to individuals considering making this transition, the comments were consistent with the findings in the study. The advice for prospective transitioners fell into two categories: what to think about prior to making the transition and advice on how to maximize your success or potential once the transition has been made.

1. Do not underestimate the challenge of this change and be sure your heart is in it.

In general, advice about making the change centered on being really honest and realistic about what such a transition entails and the reasons for doing it. Several people talked about “passion” because as one person described, “At the end of the day, your longevity in education is going to be heavily dependent on your passion for education itself,” and as another explained, “because if you don't have that passion you're going to burn out really quickly.” One interviewee expanded on what passion means: “that you believe in the value of public education, that it can alter the child's life, particularly a child in poverty and that you're committed to that work and to the kids.”

The reason the passion is so critical, study participants explained, is because school district work is probably the most challenging work. One interviewee shared, “nobody told me [how challenging this work was]. I don't think even if they told me I would have believed them.” Another person shared, “you really need to be committed because, yes, the bureaucracy will wear you down if you don't have a higher purpose.” Two interviewees shared similar sentiments, but emphasized the benefit of gaining experience in a big district. One person said this is what he tells prospective Residents: “Listen. Imagine the worst job on a day-to-day basis you could possibly have, the most frustrating job you could ever have. If you work for a big school district, that's what you're going to walk into. You're okay with having this really frustrating job...because you really want to learn how public education works...If you want to really get into a career in education, a real career, I think that the best place to start is in this

really frustrating place.” The other interviewee explained once you have the district experience, “then you can go anywhere.”

Building on these ideas, one person explained, “I would say enter with a sense of humility. I think if you've thought you've worked hard before, you've seen nothing. Because I think this work is probably the hardest work that can be done outside of literally being in the classroom. I think, that if you're connected to it with your heart, it's probably the most painful and tiring experience that you can have.”

In addition, one interviewee recommended spending some time volunteering prior to making the transition, “dip your toe” into the world of education, so you really have a sense of what the work is like. There was another person that felt too many people were excited about the newness and taking the leap, but didn’t truly understand the world they were entering. By and large, interviewees felt the support Broad provided in making the transition was absolutely indispensable and recommended anyone considering making such a transition should “go through a program with a lot of support, like Broad.” This person continued, “Because had I done this without Broad. I would have quit, I would have quit a while ago. I would have moved on and not gone back to public education.”

2. You have a role in making the experience a good one.

Interviewees shared some strategies that have helped them in finding success in the district context. From the beginning, during the matching period, it’s important for transitioners “to really have a good idea of what they want out of [their new role] and to not be afraid to hold out for that.” In other words, it’s

important to advocate for yourself and find the right opportunity – and the right sponsor or boss. Given the findings about one’s boss, it seems appropriate “to look very, very closely at not only the organizations you’re going to work for, but the person” you will be working with. Likewise, given the findings about how differences in background may predispose an individual to have strengths in particular areas, transitioners should consider their own skill sets when finding a placement. As one interviewee described, “I guess I would encourage people to really be selective and dig deep into what it is they’re going to be doing. What the plan is for them.” Another person also shared that he “would think about what you want to do in the long-term and how this helps you or not.” Another interviewee had been given advice not to “chase titles” – which he didn’t – and added simply, “if you can find someone you like working with and for, on something that you love doing – then you’re fine. Don’t worry about anything else.”

Interviewees also emphasized being patient, respectful, and building relationships with co-workers. One person explained, “Sometimes the districts don’t know how to use you and people don’t exactly understand your skill set because you didn’t come from education...they may feel a little discombobulated or confused. Be patient and build those relationships with people because it will go a long way.” Another person shared, “get ready to start making relationships on the first day because nothing is going to be more important than those.” Building on this advice, one interviewee explained, the respect and approach you bring to the relationship is as important as the relationship itself. “I would say you definitely have to humble yourself, and you have to respect folks’ work coming into this work. People have spent a number of years working in

education, and there are things you can learn from them, so don't come in thinking that you know it all, and you have it all figured out. People do have skill sets and talents from just working in this space for years." A different spin, one interviewee reflected on her previous work of "spend[ing] like 90% of our time on getting to the answer and then 10% like getting client input" which was "almost like a rubber stamp." In contrast, working in school district administration, "it's almost like the reverse." You still have work really hard "to get the answer but it may not have to be 100% analytically sound...I spend a lot more time with stakeholder input." Another interviewee shared her positive spin on the importance of collaboration: "It was just really the importance of getting the seasoned educators' point of view and perspective when you're designing a project. I think when you come in and you're in Broad and everything else, you have the business school wiz kids and then you have the traditional educators. It can be very easy for people to pick sides and not collaborate. Neither one of them in isolation does what they need to do, so it's figuring out how to collaborate so you can bring the best of both worlds together."

Relatedly, interviewees focused on areas where there is sure to be growth. One interviewee emphasized the importance of being "open-minded and reflective. As you spend time, your views of things are going to change, because of your experiences. Try your best to be open-minded and reflective. I think your views are going to change." Another person expressed the importance of getting "into a classroom. Try to get exposed to what's happening from day one if you don't have that background....try to get exposed somehow to the classrooms and students." Finally, one interviewee talked about relying on cohort-mates for support and celebrating "little wins because that's what will keep you going."

Though the role of home life or outside interests was a finding in that there were enough people that mentioned it for it to be significant, it was not an overwhelming feature of what individuals identified as support. It was also primarily the men that talked about their spouses as a source of support and in general, women did not discuss their personal or home lives at all in regard to support. As this work is all consuming, I encourage more space be made for self-care and work/life balance. It is clearly easy to get swept up into the lifestyle of being “on” 24/7, but with this can come repercussions to health and wellness. The lack of focus on this important value was a noted gap.

Advice to organizations and institutions that support career transitioners

In general, interviewees spoke longingly of their days working in the business sector as it pertained to their growth and development professionally, describing these opportunities in their corporate and consulting environments as exceptional. They provided multiple examples of how they were supported and pushed to grow to the next level and that the path for growth was clear. In contrast, their descriptions about professional supports in the education sector revealed a system that is, ironically, sorely lacking in this area. The sentiment was more about being “left alone” to get their work done and that the “support” was about having the space, time and resources to do so. They generally shared a reality that was more about relying on their own abilities to learn the content or skills necessary to be successful in education.

In many situations interviewees described specific impressionable moments in their business experiences that made a difference in terms of building their capacity to be a better leader or manager. They talked about the

early orientations that helped them understand company policies and roles and responsibilities. They talked about how performance expectations were communicated and how there was clarity on what it took to meet or exceed the bar. In one very telling example, a leader of a large district large explained how she gained team leadership skills. She shared a story in which she was asked in her consulting company to lead a team of ten – and faltered. Quickly, the firm reassigned her to manage four people until she figured out how to do that well. Then she increased to ten. This example highlights an approach to developing leadership that, as interviewees described, is inherent in the business sector.

With the overwhelming number of challenges, clearly there is something that needs to be done to address improving support structures for transitioners. The three areas of support that emerged in this study – The Broad Center, self-satisfaction/making a difference, and home life – should be maintained and bolstered to the extent possible. Tellingly, there were literally no themes around district supports in this study. (The comment by one interviewee when asked about central office supports is that it is more like “central office headaches” speaks directly to this concern.)

The suggestions below are not meant for districts only or support organizations only, but are starting places to think more about “what” rather than “for whom.” With this in mind, however, it is safe to say that there really should be internal organizational support by districts. When a workplace creates that space or the “holding environment” mentioned previously to foster optimal growth and development, this leads to increases in performance and retention (Kegan 1982, 1994).

The following support areas emerged based on the stories interviewees shared, specific answers to questions about what supports they would like to see in place, and my own thinking informed by research, experience and discussion on this topic. These categories and descriptions provide specific examples of how systems of support can be bolstered and developed for business-to-education career transitioners.

1. There needs to be more attention paid to building career paths in education administration.

A consistent finding between the exploratory study and this study, interviewees shared that the lack of clear career opportunities in education is quite problematic. On the other hand, in the business sector – consulting especially – that path is laid out from manager to partner. In education, it is not always clear how individuals land in certain positions, take on roles or responsibilities, get promoted or get fired. The first step is just bringing to attention to this topic.

For an individual, the starting point or the “entry” into the field or a new organization sets the tone for that step and the following steps in an education career. There are several aspects of the entry as it exists for Residents that should be maintained, particularly the opportunity to enter the field with prestige and possibly even some positional authority through programs like The Broad Residency. There are several other benefits including 1) creating a formal relationship with a senior leader that can advocate on behalf of the transitioner 2) the learning that happens prior to entry and during the residency that is supported by Broad and 3) the careful thought and consideration put into the

matching process between Residents and districts/positions. Several interviewees did share that it would also be helpful to have more conversations early on about how that role may or may not lead to future opportunities, to understand it in a broader context of a career trajectory.

Some other aspects of the entry that are important are opportunities to fail (and learn) and opportunities to “build credibility” first – and opportunities to succeed by matching skill sets or aptitudes with roles or tasks. Interviewees explained that it is also really helpful to be placed in an office or on a team that is open to their skill set and where they don’t immediately experience vitriol just because of their background. The opportunity to have new experiences and to develop relationships in a trusting environment is key. It is helpful when the organization or team is open to new and “diverse perspectives” and favors change – and that “meaningful opportunities to create change” exist. Transitioners’ skill sets also can be very supportive of work by academic and instructional teams, and their skill sets should be capitalized in these areas to improve processes, not limited to the operational departments in districts.

The two-year period that Residents have the support of The Broad Center is helpful for getting advice about residency placement and seeking the permanent opportunity after the two years, which offers a strong start. Interviewees discussed wanting more discussion about two-year and five-year goals (and so on) starting right at the beginning so they can start to envision a career path for themselves.

The entry and the planning for the career path that follows needs to match an individual’s interests, skill set, background, geography, and the opportunities that exist. The career plan doesn’t necessarily have to be upwardly mobile.

Several interviewees explained that they were entirely satisfied with their position and work scope, and wanted the supports in place for them to continue to be successful in their roles – roles that involve highly tangible tasks, are high impact, and close to the ground. In other cases, individuals want to see how their efforts are rewarded by being offered greater responsibility and decision-making opportunities. In general, to keep transitioners interested, their work needs to continue to be personally satisfying and intellectually stimulating.

Thinking about how to support individuals with nontraditional career paths is important, as transitioners are already “boundaryless” in their career approach, and therefore, consideration to a career path should be highly customized to meet the needs of the individual. This doesn’t mean that the only focus is going to be staying with the current district or even in school district work forever. Advice given to the Harvard Graduate School of Education’s graduating class in 2009 by Dr. Richard Elmore can also be applied.

Transitioners should “take on the aspects of the existing order that [they] find most problematic and, if [they] don't succeed at changing them, then take [their] work outside of these institutions and make models that others can see and respect...If the existing order cannot make use of [their] talents, take [their] talents somewhere where they will be acknowledged and respected and build the alternative. The worst that can happen is that [they] will fail and start again” (Anderson, 2009). It is helpful to create a vision for what is possible so there is not a feeling of being “trapped” in one and only one available path. The idea of moving back-and-forth – in positions, in organizations, or even between sectors – helps to think about how to stay fresh and engaged, and not to give into cynicism or feel defeated altogether by the challenges of school district work.

If anything, this study should illuminate that there is not one “way” or one “path” to being a successful contributor in the field of education, and there is great need to think creatively and innovatively about the possibilities for what an education career could look like.

2. A key part of professional development and support in education administration is opportunities to create connections with other people.

A key resource for learning in the education space in particular is people. Interviewees discussed ways in which their mentors, colleagues and networks provide insight into who they are as leaders, how they can improve in their leadership practice, and to get introduced to new ideas for problem solving and supporting school improvement.

For individuals new to the sector, it is key to have support through the transition. That this support is offered by someone that is experienced, respected, and makes a real connection with the transitioner is the best-case scenario for a mentoring relationship that works. If there is more than one person that can offer such a relationship, providing unique perspective or vantage into a variety of situations, this is even better. The key to creating that strong mentoring bond is the quality of the relationship, the high level of respect between the mentor and mentee, and the reciprocal relationship in which both individuals benefit from the interactions (Kram, 1998). Not all mentoring relationships are created equal nor come about the same way, as some of these relationships emerge organically and some are arranged. In the ideal situation, the relationship meets the developmental needs of both participants (Kram, 1998).

Opportunities to share and learn together with peers are also so important. Particularly in a district where there are diverse perspectives, experiences, and skill sets, strategically bringing people together to explore problems collaboratively or “exchange” expertise is key. Opportunities for this could include “expert” sharing by leading trainings (for example, a former consultant teaching a short course in PowerPoint or a former principal leading a group of central office leaders through some classroom observations.) Another possibility is some intentional partnering between transitioners and educators for a peer skill or content sharing time, where different topics are addressed regularly. Another option is collaboration on projects, where individuals’ expertise is specifically called out so that all perspectives can be brought to bear. Similarly relationships between leaders that have institutional knowledge due to their longevity in the system and leaders new to the district with experience from other systems or sectors can be helpful and fruitful in terms of knowledge sharing and “exchanging” ideas and thus, developing professionally. Finally, there are opportunities for peer exchange even within the transitioners themselves. The finding that emerged highlighting the difference between former consultants and former corporate managers gives rise to a perfect opportunity for knowledge exchange, perhaps by involving individuals with a different background in a similar project that capitalizes on their strengths. For example, a former corporate manager would be positioned well to support a former consultant through the plan to implementation phase of a project. This provides a teaching and learning opportunity from which both parties can gain experience. The main point is shifting the idea that our differences are a problem to be solved to the idea that our differences make problem solving easier.

A network of like-minded individuals is also helpful for transitioners, and right now Broad serves as the main organizer of contact information, communications, and events that keep this particular group of transitioners connected and strong. Given the interviewees' generally passionate enthusiasm for the quality and support of this network and the inspiration and new learning that results from Broad events, increasing opportunities through Broad (and/or other support organizations) would be very helpful. This could include more regular, local events or even virtual events to help people stay grounded and connected.

Similarly, several people mentioned the importance of a local organizer/advocate/point-of-contact for the Broad network. This person could serve (or does serve) as a main resource for entry, and in some cases can help plan informal local after-hour or lunch events. Formalizing such roles can help keep this local support more integrated and consistent. One person suggested that "districts of choice" are identified where the Broad network and related supports are strong. Building on this idea, it could be useful to create a rating/profile system to examine where districts are along the trajectory for inclusivity and professional development, delineating some of the above ideas and supports that make a district a great place to work generally, and particularly if one is transitioning from another sector.

The responsibility to develop and retain employees resides in the hands of the employer, even if this means identifying partner organizations to outsource some of this support. Since the challenges and the politics of school districts are great, they are at a disadvantage to lead this charge, and it is often something that is low on the priority list or basically goes unaddressed. Given The Broad

Center's investment in human capital strategies, it could be useful for them to apply lessons learned from this study to other scalable changes in the way school districts work, and manage up or across some of these ideas for systems building.

3. Professional supports in the daily work of business-to-education administration career transitioners should be tailored for their unique needs.

Mentioned above, few supports exist in central office administration that truly foster professional growth and development. Systems for managing performance and aligning professional supports in a school district are at a very basic level – if at all existent.

The Broad Center does fulfill the role of providing a great deal of preparation for the transition and for working in education, and Residents now receive a masters degree in education for their participation in the program if they fulfill all the requirements over the two-year period. However, other than this support, interviewees reported being responsible for their own learning for the most part, so there is a lot of room for improvement for more regular and structured learning in a district environment.

Professionals across all sectors improve their practice through continuous professional learning – and many professions have standards for this: accounting, medicine, and law, for example. More time and space and access to the most up-to-date research and innovations in education clearly needs to be made. While there are conferences and books and online resources, learning in the education field tends to be disparate and happenstance based on an individual's exposure or drive to learn. Brown bag lunches and book clubs are easy and informal options for learning new ideas and content relevant to the education field. A

more consistent curriculum and yearlong program for professional learning for central office leaders and managers – by content area, or by department or by individual – would be a huge boost to the people doing this work. For now, efforts are stop-and-go, often unrelated.

The Broad Center and some districts do put in place tools or systems to support leadership development specifically through 360 feedback, executive coaching, and frameworks for leading. This is a solid practice that should be maintained and offered to more people more consistently.

Business-to-education transitioners are in a unique position. Hired for the specific background and skills they bring, there are few opportunities to stay up-to-date on the most current practices, reflected in the finding shared in Chapter 4. The Broad Center is positioned well to support Residents and graduates in maintaining the business skill set, with one option being “brush up” sessions offered at cohort meetings and forums. Another option could be partnering with an executive MBA program to offer webinars or local classes or mini-conferences so Residents and graduates are exposed to the professional skills and ideas that positioned them well for the residency in the first place.

Finally, another finding related to professional learning is the desire of interviewees to spend more time at school sites. There doesn’t have to be “one way” to implement such a support, and interviewees offered multiple ways to gain experience and get integrated into the life of a school. Options include everything from full time teaching or spending time serving as a principal intern or assistant principal to tutoring or substitute teaching weekly or regularly. Ensuring central office projects incorporate user experience preferences and responses can help transitioners spend more time in schools testing, piloting or

getting feedback on project ideas. Even spending one hour of “observation” in a different classroom every week and reporting on or sharing look-fors would be helpful in grounding transitioners’ understanding of what “the field” looks like and how it operates.

Districts and The Broad Center both have a hand in supporting individuals’ professional learning from the point of entry and after the residency. There are already several strong supports in place through Broad, but few in districts – and certainly areas that need to be addressed to accommodate the unique needs of transitioners.

Closing Thoughts

The task at hand is significant. We face “a multifaceted problem that contributes to and holds in place an education system that no longer fosters a healthy economy or democracy – or the individuals they are intended to support and represent... Our education problem is much more one of obsolescence, in need of ‘reinvention,’ rather than failure, in need of mere ‘reform’” (Wagner, 2006).

Ironically, in the practice of education leadership and politics, we also fail to put the key structures in place to foster a learning environment that works for adults. There are few structures in place for adult growth and development and in the end, the opportunity to “reinvent” our system is in part stifled by our inability to design and implement a system that capitalizes on each individual’s unique offerings and supports each person’s development into the full potential of his or her leadership.

In addition to providing an overview of the findings, this chapter lays out

implications to practice by providing direct advice to individuals considering making the transition, and in presenting some ideas on how to support business-to-education administration career transitioners. Of course, some of these ideas have broader application to all individuals serving in a leadership capacity in school systems. At this time, it is possible to find success as a transitioner, but much of it relies on luck, self-motivation, or perseverance. As the education sector continues to undergo an influx of leaders with nontraditional backgrounds, the hope is that it will respond accordingly with the right supports. In the meantime, outside organizations such as Broad will continue to support these transitions during and after the initial entry into the field of education.

The goal of this study is to provide food for thought about this new trend, provide insight into how individuals that take this leap experience the transition, and to offer some thinking on how to manage expectations, and create opportunities and support systems to make the most of these transitions and the diversity of perspective that they create.

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

I would like to learn more about your career and experiences prior to applying to The Broad Residency.

- Can you please tell me more about your work and education experiences, starting with your undergraduate studies?
 - What were the main tasks, functions, or responsibilities your previous positions entailed?
 - What characterized the culture or work environment in each of these positions (work style, professional opportunities, commitment, and work atmosphere)?
 - Do you think of yourself as successful in that work? Why or why not?
- What prompted your decision to make the transition and apply for The Broad Residency?
 - What were the key influences in the decision to make the transition?
 - Do you remember the moment you knew you had come to the decision – how did it feel?
- How did you explain your decision to change careers to your friends?

I would like to learn more about your experiences working in district administration.

- Let's start by comparing your current work with the prior work experiences we just discussed.
 - In what ways are your current responsibilities similar and different from your previous work experiences?
 - How was your entry into the field of education similar or different from your entry into your previous work?
 - How would you describe the differences in work environment, culture, and expectations between district work and previous work experiences?
 - How do you think of your personal impact in terms of your previous work and now in regard to your current work in district administration?
 - Do you feel your current organization does a good job capitalizing on the skills and experience you bring?
- How do you think of the “fit” between your current position in the district and the experiences and skills you bring to it?
- What are some of the easier aspects of your district work?
- What are some of the challenges you face?
- What supports were most important to you as you made the transition?

- What supports are most important to you in your current role?

I would like for you to consider how your experiences might compare with those of your administrative peers with different backgrounds from you.

- How similar or different do you think these are for your administrative peers who have also transitioned from business but from consulting / corporate (use relevant term for participant)?
 - How similar or different do you think these are for your administrative peers who have non-education backgrounds, but no connection with The Broad Residency?
 - How similar or different do you think these are for your administrative peers who have years of experience in education, such as teaching experience or principal experience?
- Do you see yourself continuing your work in public education? Why or why not?
 - If yes, would you like to continue in your current role or do you have a preference for another role or path?
 - What are your reasons for continuing to pursue work in urban public education?
- How does your current work fit in to your long-term career goals?
- How have your career goals changed over time?
- What is the most encouraging or satisfying aspect of your work in public education? What is the most disappointing or distressing?
- How do you think districts can best capitalize on and support people with your experience and background?
- What advice would you give to individuals considering TBR or considering making the switch from business sector work to public education work?

Appendix B. Shared Themes for All Transitioners

1. *Skill set “fit” for all transitioners*
 - a. **Adding value/profile of a problem solver**
 - i. Competence and confidence with analyzing data, working with stakeholders, developing solutions
 - ii. Strong work ethic, ability to get things done effectively and efficiently
 - iii. Outside experience brings perspective to identify concerns, including easy-to-address “low hanging fruit”
 - iv. Role of the Resident (i.e. “in-house” consultant-type roles that focus on strategy, projects) allow some Residents to explore different facets of the organization, get exposure to different people and content, and suggest or get matched with meaningful projects
2. *Culture “fit” for all transitioners*
 - a. **Commitment to mission-driven work**
 - i. Early exposure to non-profit or volunteer experiences or influence from educators in family
 - ii. Seeking more meaning from work; titles and money not so important (despite some questioning from family, friends, and colleagues)
 - iii. The Broad Residency provided a competitive and prestigious way to make the transition and to really capitalize on skill sets
 - iv. Emphasis on education as lever for social change; shared emotional stories about kids
 - v. Feelings of pride doing this work
 - b. **It’s all about relationships**
 - i. Being able to “read” an organization, use relationships to your benefit
 - ii. Learning from others: those with a different (k-12) background and those with a similar background: mixed reviews
 - iii. The importance of one’s boss
3. *Challenges all transitioners face*
 - a. **The politics of big districts**
 - i. Adult agendas and power struggles
 - ii. Elected school boards
 - iii. Superintendent turnover
 - iv. Competitive nature of relationships within a bureaucracy
 - b. **Lack of accountability and performance systems**
 - i. Accountability systems are lacking, uncertainty about what to measure
 - ii. Conflicts of Mindset and Employee Performance
 - c. **Professional life and identity**
 - i. Keeping skills from the past relevant
 - ii. Being an “outsider” to the sector
 - iii. Craving more experience in the field
 - iv. Career path limitations
4. *Supports identified by all transitioners*
 - a. **The Broad Residency/The Broad Center**
 - i. Support in making the transition
 - ii. Staff support during the residency
 - iii. Support from the network of peers/colleagues
 - iv. Quarterly sessions and annual Broad Center Forum
 - v. Executive coaching
 - b. **Feeling successful, commitment to the work, and making an impact**
 - i. Improving student outcomes/increasing graduation rates
 - ii. Being a problem solver, influencer or decision maker
 - iii. Leading initiatives and teams
 - iv. New learning
 - c. **Supportive family/home life**
 - i. Spouse/partner and family life
 - ii. Outside interests

Appendix C. Themes Specific to Previous Professional Background

1. *Skill set “fit” for former consultants*
 - a. **Selling ideas with data**
 - i. Telling an objective story and getting to the “nth degree of detail”
 - ii. Getting buy-in to move forward with a project
 - iii. Compelling and confident presentations
 - b. **Setting up processes**
 - i. Systems level, strategic thinking about organizational structure and how to support work flow
 - ii. Project management and the use of work plans
 - iii. Ability to handle large projects and keep the scope of projects manageable
 - c. **Change management**
 - i. Readiness of organization to undertake change
 - ii. Working with a team to move forward with something new
 - iii. Honest openness to solutions and working collaboratively with stakeholders
2. *Culture “fit” for former consultants*
 - a. **New clients**
 - i. Forming new relationships quickly
 - ii. Doing a lot of listening
 - iii. Comfort with senior leaders
 - b. **Strong teams/teammates**
 - i. High caliber environment, “smart” colleagues
 - ii. Cooperative not competitive
3. *Skill set “fit” for former corporate managers*
 - a. **Organizational dynamics: managing teams, being managed**
 - i. Knowledge of how to manage a team and support individuals with the right roles and hold them accountable by setting up the right systems and structures
 - ii. Comfort with frequent personnel changes
 - iii. Getting on-the-ground to see how to meet the needs of the team
 - iv. Navigating the organization/ understanding organizational dynamics
 - b. **Diverse roles**
 - i. Individuals with diverse backgrounds in the first place (accounting, business, engineering)
 - ii. Corporate environment differences: banking, services, products
 - iii. Task needs had wide variation, including market research, presentations to the CEO, reviewing product line, etc.
 - iv. Management programs and general corporate training focus on leadership practices
4. *Culture “fit” for former corporate managers*
 - a. **Clear direction/bottom line**
 - i. Clarity of purpose: to make money (and to do so, must be customer focused)
 - ii. Performance and results-driven culture; continuous improvement
 - iii. Consistency of culture and mission
 - iv. Innovative and entrepreneurial opportunities (degree of flexibility to solve problems)
5. *Strengths/successes for former consultants*
 - a. **Strategy and influence**
6. *Challenges for former consultants*
 - a. **Implementation**
7. *Strengths/successes for former corporate managers*
 - a. **Implementation**
8. *Challenges for former corporate managers*
 - a. **Constantly changing direction**

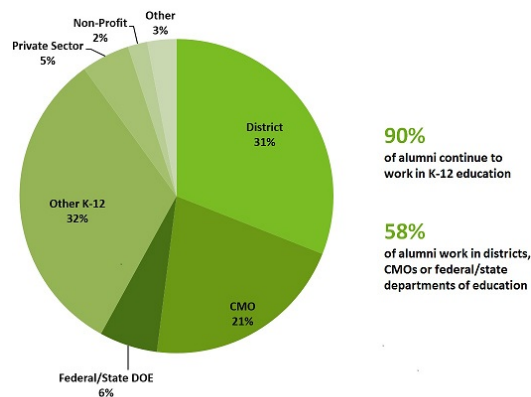
Appendix D. The Broad Residency Statistics

Key indicators of success include:

- 98% of Residents on average scored 3.0 or higher (on a five-point scale) on “overall contribution” to their organizations in 360 Degree Feedback
- 93% of Residents complete the program on average
- 91% of Residents who responded to the end-of-program survey reported they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their overall experience in the residency
- 90% of alumni continue to work in K-12 public education
- 68% of alumni are in CEO-level roles or working within two levels of CEOs
- 22% of alumni are in cabinet-level roles or higher within school operating organizations
- 75% of alumni surveyed said TBC increased the impact they are able to have in the education sector

Source: The Broad Residency Educational Effectiveness Review

Settings in Which Broad Residency Alumni Currently Work, by Organization Type



Source: www.broadcenter.org

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